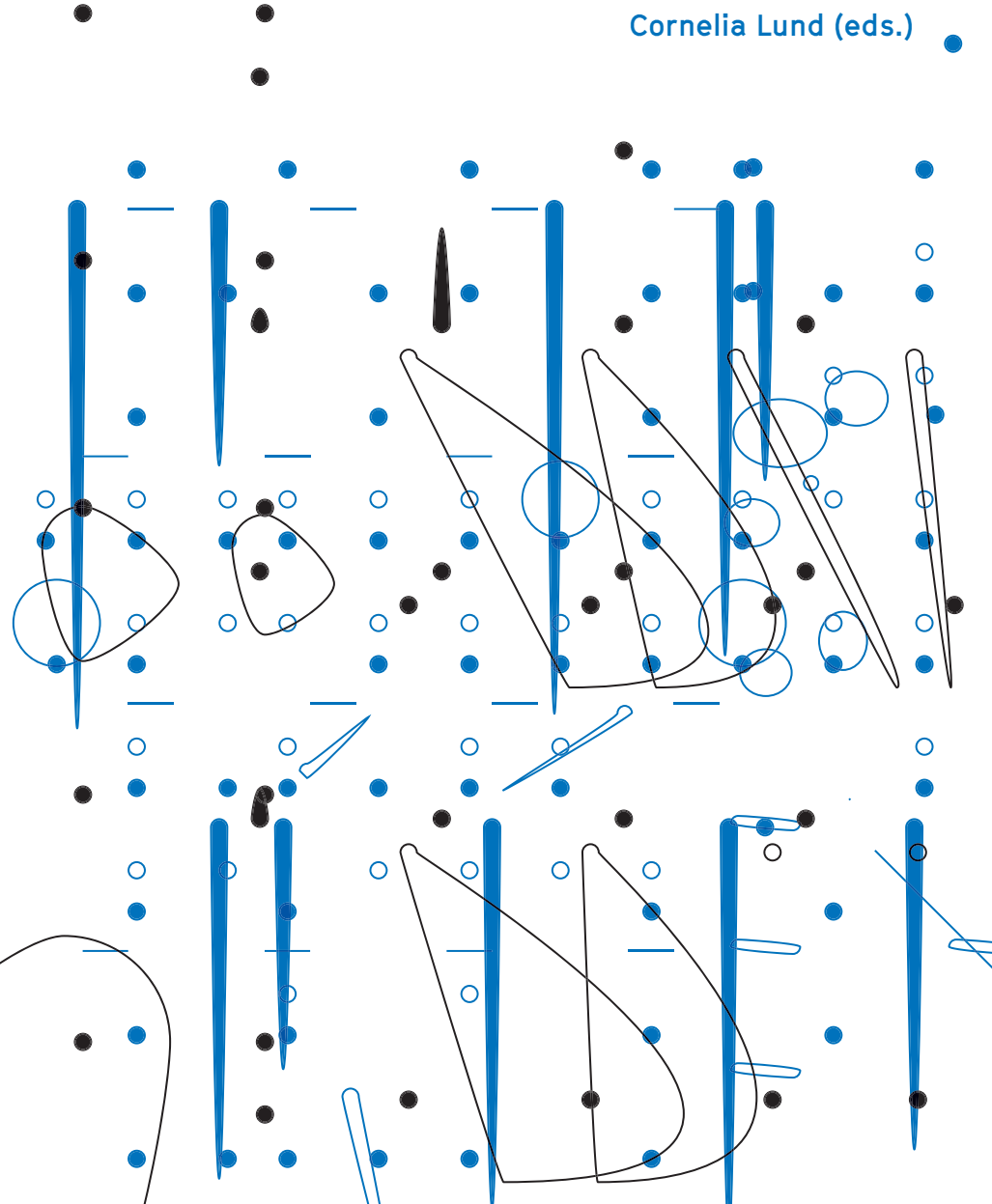


# THE AUDIOVISUAL BREAKTHROUGH



Ana Carvalho and  
Cornelia Lund (eds.)



21 Visual Music

41 Expanded

Cinema

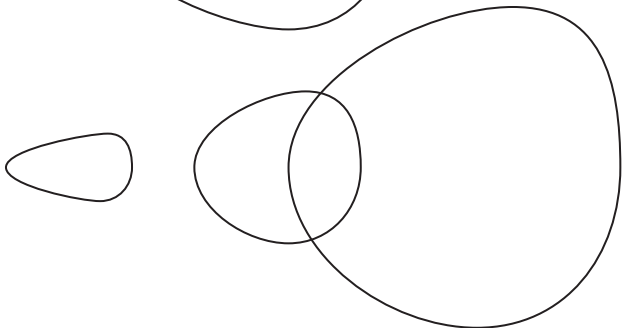
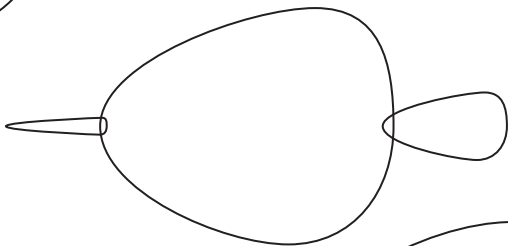
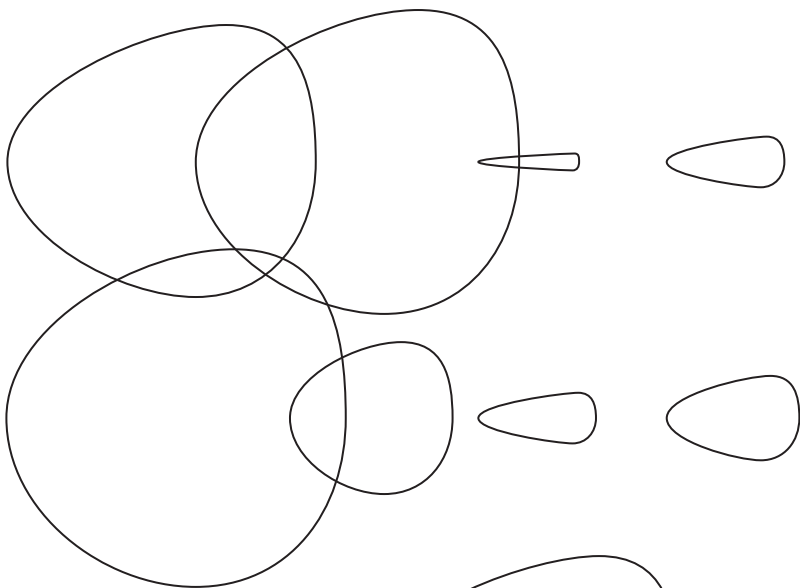
83 Live Cinema

109 VJing

129 Live

Audiovisual

Performance



# 4 Practice and Discourse

PRACTICE AND DISCOURSE.  
AN INTRODUCTION AS MANUAL

Ana Carvalho and  
Cornelia Lund

The Audiovisual Breakthrough guides us across the landscape of artistic live practices that present sound and image through technological means. This landscape has been radically reshaped during the last 20 years due to technological developments causing what we might call an “audiovisual breakthrough,” which means that audiovisual artistic production has gained a certain visibility and a certain, even institutionalized, standing. The main objective of this book, however, is not to portray this landscape with its main players and their activities, but to find out more about the underlying concepts that help us explain these activities.

● Whoever has been trying to write an academic or curatorial text on this area has probably felt trapped in a confusing web of unclear, or even inconsistent, definitions. Visual music, expanded cinema, VJing, live cinema, and live audiovisual performance are the most widely used concepts here, each of these terms addressing a different angle of contemporary audiovisual production contextualized within specific features and a related history. Holding this in mind, The Audiovisual Breakthrough aims at developing useful definitions for both the

theoretical debate and the performance context. ●●● We might of course say—especially as performers—that we “really don’t care” and that we are “more interested in doing than explaining,”<sup>1</sup> [

The survey was carried out in 2014. It consisted of an international online survey and, parallel to it, a survey mostly addressing the Viennese community and undertaken in the context of the sound:frame festival. The results are discussed below in this text.

as one of the participants in our survey put it. At this point, it can prove interesting to introduce the history of this book and the project behind it, which will show that what at first glance might seem like a purely theoretical problem is in fact very closely linked to actual developments in the world of audiovisual artistic production. Some time ago, Cornelia was invited to the LaptopsRus conference at the Reina Sofía in Madrid. Discussing the possible subject of her contribution with the curators, Shu Lea Cheang and Maite Cajaraville, they told her how they had been struck by VJs telling them that they were “not doing VJing any more” but “AV performances.” At first sight, this might seem of little consequence, and yet such statements lead to some interesting questions: Why is it so important to former VJs to be considered AV performers? And were they really doing something different? Or were they opting for another term for other reasons? These initial questions led deeper into the aforementioned confusing tableau of terms and concepts and their relations to actual performances. It soon became

obvious that clarifications were needed for meaningful communication about and within the field of artistic AV production to be possible in the future. ✱— Outsiders will find it much easier to understand a given context when a clear terminology is applied and mutually understood by those involved in it, those who construct it. The variety in the designated meaning of terms used by festivals, symposia, and other events does not really offer this for our context at the moment. Although permanent use and critique belong to the process of practically defining each term, the use of a clear syntax of terms is still important for all practical purposes now that audiovisual performative practices have become well established. For example, artists need to situate and describe their work, and festivals and institutions need to announce events in their programs to facilitate the development of expectations on part of the public. Then it is also necessary to set a stable ground from which academic researchers on an international level can move forward beyond definitions, to elaborate on philosophical, aesthetic, and theoretical implications related to contemporary practices. Accordingly, this book is addressed to artists, researchers, students, and teachers within the field of audiovisual practices and anyone working at their intersection with other fields of knowledge. ● Even if its history is sometimes traced back to Pythagoras, artistic audiovisual production owes its current blossoming to rather recent technological developments. It is in fact continually evolving, which is one of the difficulties

of working out stable definitions. This complexity of defining live practices with sound and image has led us to the decision to approach *The Audiovisual Breakthrough* as a collaborative project—an approach that also mirrors the collaborative approaches dominant in the audiovisual field itself. ● A group of six experts gathered around the project and decided to work out definitions for the five aforementioned main categories. Considering the ever-changing nature of the field, they set out to try and define these terms within a contemporary context, describing the permeable borders of the different categories, while also showing up possible future developments. A survey was organized to foster the dialogue with artists and professionals involved in audiovisual production and to gather knowledge about their ways of working and defining their own work. ● When the group met for the first time at *sound:frame festival 2014* in Vienna, it was decided that the final outcome of the project should take the form of a book, including texts on the five categories and the results of the survey. Each text is written by a member of the group who is a recognized expert in the topic. Collectively, the group gathers different approaches to the subjects at stake: as writers, teachers, researchers, artists, curators, and editors, the authors come from different contexts and approaches, while also moving between different countries. The texts are informed by these discursive differences, providing the readers an opportunity to gain insight into other, wider discourses and examples. ● ● The project group members are: Ana



Carvalho, a Portuguese live video composer, performer, and editor for live audiovisual performance; Eva Fischer, an Austrian art historian, curator, visualist, and founder and director of sound:frame Festival for Audiovisual Expressions for VJing/visualists; Cornelia Lund, a German art historian, media theorist, and curator for visual music; Adeena Mey, a Swiss-Cambodian critic and researcher for expanded cinema; Gabriel Menotti, a Brazilian curator and lecturer at the Federal University of Espírito Santo for live cinema. The survey was designed and organized by Maria Pfeifer, an Austrian comparative literature scholar and part of the sound:frame festival team. This group was later joined by Eva-Maria Offermann, a German graphic designer working on experimental book projects and poster art, who has designed the publication as a graphic comment on audiovisuality. ∫ While the final texts are each written by a single author and informed by her or his specific background, the framework of the whole project is the result of collective research and discussions that started before and went on after the meeting in Vienna. As the five terms in question are, on the one hand, fashioned by academic and non-academic debate and, on the other hand, by contemporary audiovisual art practice, it seemed imperative not only to analyze the discourse but also to survey the field of audiovisual art practice. Another vital part of the project was therefore the exchange with artists and professionals involved in audiovisual production. Parallel to the meeting in Vienna, the team had the opportunity to swap ideas

with several Vienna-based artists including Anita Hafner (Lost in Bass), Jan Lauth (media-opera), Gerald Moser, Station Rose, and others in the framework of a public discussion at the sound:frame festival. Apart from personal meetings and our intimate knowledge of the field, the survey proved an important tool for getting into contact with as many practitioners as possible. Although the results are not fully representative but rather indicative of an international scene,<sup>2</sup> [

The number of participants was not large enough and their countries of origin were not diverse enough to make the survey truly representative.

they were very helpful for verifying perceived tendencies and also the pertinence of the discussions the group had been leading during the workshop in Vienna. The survey is included in this publication on different levels: some articles refer to it directly, like those on “Live Audiovisual Performance” and “VJing,” while it is of more indirect relevance for others—for example the article on “Visual Music,” since practically none of the participants in the survey consider themselves as visual music artists. To give readers an insight into the nature of the questions and answers, the statistical information gained from the survey is represented by visualizations, as well as examples of some answers to specific questions.

✱ All these different forms of exchange allowed us to define some basic parameters for the project as well as a common methodological basis. Correspondingly, before we start our discussion of the field of audiovisual artistic production in depth, it seems

useful to come to an understanding about the basic meaning of the term “audiovisual.”

● Generally speaking, audiovisual works range across media such as TV, cinema, and live shows to include all the possibilities that present a stimulus to both auditory and visual sensorial systems. These media may not even be technologically developed, puppetry and theater can be audiovisual. To refer to a work as audiovisual already implies an intermedia connection, one whose very nature lies in the combination of the two words put together: audio and visual. By itself, “audiovisuality” is not an artistic practice but describes a generic group of practices. Within this group, production is continually developing. Our main fields of interest are the live practices that include audio and image, and even there the variety of works presented expresses the enormous possibilities within this combination. Consequently, part of the difficulties of working out stable definitions are the infinite technical, conceptual, and aesthetic possibilities for using sound and image. ○

The Audiovisual Breakthrough follows the main purpose of making this complexity somehow manageable by putting forth and elaborating on definitions for the five main concepts that we have identified within this field: visual music, expanded cinema, live cinema, VJing, and live audiovisual performance. While our focus lies on these terms as they are used within a contemporary context, historical references are, of course, considered in the individual articles. The main periods of reference are, very generally speaking: first, what we could call the

period of synaesthesia, from around 1900 until the 1930s, when many modernists showed an interest in correlations between music and the visual arts, and also fresh ideas of how sound and images could come together were stimulated by the newly invented medium of film. Second, the 1960s, when ideas of the “expanded arts” 3 [

See, for example: George Maciunas, “Expanded Arts Diagram,” Film Culture—Expanded Arts 43 (1966), p. 7.

gave a new elan to the combination of sound and image. Third, the period of ongoing digitalization from the 1990s on, when the possibilities of combining sound and images in realtime became gradually more powerful and faster. ≈ It is hardly original to state the impossibility of arranging any field of activities in neat boxes—and yet this is, of course, very true for the five terms in question and their definitions. They are all players on the same grounds and can therefore only be defined in relation to each other. Furthermore, no field exists completely independent from its surroundings, and thus it is necessary to define the concepts also in relation to other relevant art or music practices. ●●● Considering the ever-changing nature of audiovisual live practices, our articles aim to develop relational and fluid definitions, describing the permeable borders of the different categories, and also showing possible future developments. Nevertheless, to define always means to include and exclude certain aspects, and we are aware of the problem that there are hundreds of individual cases that would

be worth a special case study. This project, however, as a mostly theoretical work, follows a more general approach: trying to offer a framework that will fit a majority of cases, and attempting to develop manageable definitions for the time being.  $\Delta \Delta \Delta$   $\Delta \Delta$  Two questions in our survey pointed directly to the five concepts, asking participants to choose the definition they felt was most suited to describe their practice and their own role (e.g. as a VJ or live cinema artist). While many of the participants chose between the options provided, a large number also chose the possibility to give an open-text response, providing their own descriptions for their practices (see p. 71). They offer many more terms than the ones we define in this book—so how did we come to our choices? As already mentioned, we selected the most widely used concepts, not necessarily in the eyes of all the practitioners themselves, but surely if we take into consideration institutional contexts such as festivals, project spaces, museums, and the paratexts they produce, as well as academic discourse. The decision to focus on live performance was prompted by our research, which had shown us that the definitions in this field were the most unstable. This is also due to the fact that some of the concepts, such as VJing, live cinema, and live audiovisual performance, are comparatively recent and therefore still evolving, whereas the older and more established concepts, such as visual music and expanded cinema, have to be reformulated in view of current developments. Visual music and expanded cinema are also

the two concepts not necessarily linked to performance, expanded cinema doesn't even have to be audiovisual. We chose to integrate them all the same, since a very important part of what takes place under these denominations is still performative and audiovisual. 4 [

Even if expanded cinema is not per se an audiovisual practice, the overview introducing the book Expanded Cinema: Art, Performance, Film includes "VJ events and 'real-time visual performance.'" David Curtis, A.L. Rees, Duncan White, Steven Ball (eds.), Expanded Cinema: Art, Performance, Film, London: Tate Publishing, 2011, p. 9. Adeena Mey's article in the present publication does not especially address the topic of audiovisuality, instead it opens up a wider picture of expanded cinema and its relation to performance with image and sound. For some case studies see e.g. Maxa Zoller, "Sound in Expanded Cinema: Malcolm Le Grice's Berlin Horse," in: Cornelia Lund and Holger Lund (eds.), Audio.Visual: On Visual Music and Related Media, Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2009, pp. 78–85.

And the articles will show that, despite the differences between concepts, they form an intricate web of audiovisual relations centered around four main characteristics that play a crucial role in our definitional work: liveness, intermediality, performativity, and cinematicity. ● Such characteristics, mostly tied to the shared experience of an artistic practice developing in time and space, might seem difficult to translate to the pages of a book, and yet Eva-Maria Offermann's design develops a parallel argument. The chosen font, GT Cinetype,

combines allusions to analog and digital working processes. It is based on the design of cinematic subtitles engraved in the film stock by an analog laser moving only in straight lines and therefore unable to deliver curved letters—the angular letters can also be read as a reference to the first attempts in designing digital fonts, still without postscript. Typographically, a rich set of references is opened up to the cinematic context and, in consequence, to moving images, analog and digital, to projections, and to translations from one medium to the other. The motif underlying the layout is the grid as structural reference to musical composition. The grid becomes visible in the information graphics, whose reduced simplicity reminds us of notations. The idea of notation is developed further by the use of certain signs: re-notation at the end of every paragraph in the texts, indicated by a continually changing sign. Rhythmical notations, too: variations of signs indicating the proportions in the graphics accentuate the concept of signs in motion, of shifting signs. Cinematicity and notation therefore serve as the main elements in the design concept to express the idea of translations, which is so fundamental for audiovisual thought.

● We hope that by describing the genesis of The Audiovisual Breakthrough and explaining our approach and basic working tools, we could arouse your curiosity. Rather than to already disclose too much of the contents of each article, we would now like to invite you to discover the publication yourselves and to stroll through its contents, both textual and graphical.

“I always try to understand the performance as an experiment on space, public, and context. The aim is to understand the relation between poetics and the technical



configuration of each  
performative act.”

Do you prefer any context to show your work?





Within the family of terms discussed in this publication, visual music is the oldest cousin. As such, the term assumes two different functions: on the one hand, it is referred to as an ancestor that has engendered other, more recent audiovisual expressions, while, on the other hand, visual music is very much alive as a contemporary audiovisual expression in its own right. In this double function of being an antecedent of the music clip, of live cinema, or VJing,<sup>1</sup> [ for example, and of still being a player in the same field of contemporary audiovisual production, the term has acquired an extremely broad meaning, to the point of becoming potentially meaningless. ✱— When we think of visual music, we probably have in mind a certain idea of what it looks like. “Mostly abstract and non-narrative visuals combined with sound, presented either as film or as a live or realtime performance involving projection,” could be a minimal definition based on experience. One look at the Internet, however, is enough to show that the situation is more complex. Visual music seems to serve as an umbrella term for all kinds of audiovisual production—the umbrella having become a very large one since the advent of realtime technology, sheltering everything from live cinema,<sup>2</sup> [ through music video and installations, to interactive applications.<sup>3</sup> [ Therefore, if we don’t wish to dismiss

## 1 [

Some publications address this historical lineage explicitly in their titles, such as “From Visual Music to the Music Clip” in the subtitle of: Veruschka Bódy and Peter Weibel (eds.), Clip, Klapp, Bum: Von der visuellen Musik zum Musikvideo, Cologne: DuMont, 1987; or “Visual Music: From the Avant-Garde to the Music Clip and VJing” in the subtitle of: Agnes Fischer and Ines Hubert, “Visuelle Musik: Von der Avantgarde über das Musikvideo zum VJing,” 2005, <http://server4.medienkomm.uni-halle.de/filmsound/kap1-4.htm> (accessed Sep 1, 2015); while other definitions refer more implicitly to visual music by counting traditional examples for visual music such as color organs or experimental films by Oskar Fischinger among their predecessors (see 375 Wikipedians, VJing, Greyscale Press, 2010, chapter 1.1, and César Ustarroz, Teoría del VJing: Realización y representación audiovisual a tiempo real, Madrid: Ediciones Libertarias, 2010, chapter 3).

## 2 [

The Punto y Raya Festival and the Reykjavik Center for Visual Music organized a “live cinema competition” for their joint festival edition in 2014 that was clearly defined as a visual music festival by its description. See: [http://www.puntoyrayafestival.com/descargas/14\\_RVM\\_PyR\\_press\\_release.pdf](http://www.puntoyrayafestival.com/descargas/14_RVM_PyR_press_release.pdf) (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

## 3 [

See e.g. the Visual Music Award 2015, <http://www.visual-music-award.de/index.cfm?siteid=7> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

the notion of visual music because it has become unmanageable, a thorough examination of the field of contemporary visual music is imperative in order to reestablish a more stable and viable definition. A set of main questions will structure our analysis, in an attempt to frame the field from different angles: How does contemporary visual music relate to historical forms and preoccupations of visual music? Where is it being made and discussed? Who are the producers and theoreticians of visual music? In which contexts does it appear? And finally: How does it relate to the other players in the field of contemporary audiovisual production?  $\int$  Born some hundred years ago, the term “visual music” is deeply rooted in the artistic exploration of synaesthesia of the time.<sup>4</sup> [ Its historical ancestry is traditionally located in Pythagoras’ reflections on music and color being both organized in intervals. Some centuries later those reflections on the physical nature of sound and color gradually led to the discovery of sound and light waves. From color organs and experiments with oscilloscope techniques to digital programming,<sup>5</sup> [ the idea of a direct analogy between these waveforms, a mathematical system that would link them rationally, as well as ways of converting sound to image and vice versa, have been at the core of visual music experiments. Consequently, visual music artists have always seized on the latest developments in media technology or even created new instruments customized to their needs.<sup>6</sup> [

## 4 [

The term is generally said to have been used for the first time (or one of the first times) by Roger Fry. He mentions “visual music” in the catalogue of a Post-Impressionist exhibition at the Grafton Gallery in 1912; see: Roger Fry, Vision and Design, London: Chatto & Windus, 1920, p. 157. Then the term appears again in connection to Kandinsky’s paintings in an article published on August 2, 1913, in The Nation; see: Frances Spalding, Roger Fry: Art and Life, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, p. 168.

## 5 [

We won’t retrace the history of visual music here, it has been done numerous times, more or less extensively, e.g. by Bódy and Weibel, Clip, Klapp, Bum (see note 1), or by: Kerry Brougher, Jeremy Strick, Ari Wiseman, Judith Zilczer (eds.), Visual Music: Synaesthesia in Art and Music since 1900, London: Thames and Hudson, 2005.

## 6 [

See Nick Fox-Gieg, Cindy Keefer, Margaret Schedel, “Editorial,” Organised Sound 17 (2012), p. 97; online at: doi:10.1017/S1355771812000015 (accessed Sep 1, 2015), and also implicitly Kerry Brougher’s article “Visual-Music Culture,” in: Brougher, Strick, Wiseman, Zilczer, Visual Music (see note 5), pp. 88–178.

Such enthusiasm for technological solutions is so characteristic of a certain kind of visual music that in 1986 William Moritz even warned against “the delusion of technology.”<sup>7</sup> [ Thus, it is very typical that VJs include visual music when they outline their own genealogy. ∂ ∓ Whereas some of the historical heritage to visual music—such as a compositional approach that stresses the structural relationship between visuals and sounds—is hardly contested, the common attitude toward synaesthesia is ambivalent, to say the least. Yet its place in the discourse and production of contemporary visual music is affirmed by titles of events such as “Música Visual: El Nuevo Arte Sinestético” (Caracas, 2009).<sup>8</sup> [ Even the most polemical attitude, which declares visual music dead “because synaesthetic art has come to a dead-end,”<sup>9</sup> [ assumes that visual music is based on synaesthesia, but adds a negative twist by defining the “hallucinatory fusion of the senses” as a mere “marketing ploy,” as dangerous as “the myths of interactivity and other immersive/absorbing/homogenizing environments.”<sup>10</sup> [ Without actively dismissing visual music, Hervé Vanel’s argumentation points in a similar direction by affirming that a certain enthusiastic discourse about the digital possibilities of intertwining music and images “belongs to a philosophy that is deeply rooted in the utopian dream of visual music.”<sup>11</sup> [ A modernist utopia, closely linked to the wish for a “‘better society’ that has never ceased to be beckoned through the



7 [  
William Moritz, "Towards an Aesthetics of Visual Music,"  
1986, <http://www.centerforvisualmusic.org/TAVM.htm>  
(accessed Sep 1, 2015).

8 [  
See [http://www.corneta.org/no\\_44/musica\\_visual\\_el\\_nuevo\\_arte\\_sinestesico.html](http://www.corneta.org/no_44/musica_visual_el_nuevo_arte_sinestesico.html) (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

9 [  
Laurent Carlier, "VJing between Image and Sound," in:  
Cornelia Lund and Holger Lund (eds.), Audio.Visual:  
On Visual Music and Related Media, Stuttgart: Arnoldsche  
Art Publishers, 2009, p. 163.

10 [  
Ibid.

11 [  
Hervé Vanel, "Visual Muzak and the Regulation of the  
Senses. (Notes on Nicolas Schöffer)," in: Lund and Lund,  
Audio.Visual (see note 9), p. 59.

diverse aspirations for a synthesis of the arts,”<sup>12</sup> [ which still shines through in—rather more esoteric—formulations, such as the “holistic multi-sensual and expressive aesthetic,”<sup>13</sup> [ that the Frankfurt-based Visual Music Award expects from the entries to the competition. ∫ ∫ As modernist utopias, however, are generally considered to have failed, their key concepts tend to lose impact, and so synaesthesia has disappeared from a large part of the contemporary discourse on visual music. Or it is at least discussed with some skepticism. Keefer and Ox acknowledge that synaesthesia is still part of the field of visual music, but “certainly not the prominent or most significant definition.”<sup>14</sup> [ Their proposed solution is the concept of “metaphoric”<sup>15</sup> [ synaesthesia. ◇ But, if synaesthesia is not the central element of visual music any more, how can the term be defined today? For Fox-Gieg, Keefer, and Schedel, in their “Editorial” to one of the more recent publications on visual music, “perhaps the most useful [definition] refers to visuals composed as if they were music, using musical structures. Another definition refers to a visualization of music, using the structures of an underlying composition in a new work. Still more examples of visual music include works using manual, mechanical, or algorithmic means of trans-coding sound to image, pieces which translate images into sound, abstract silent films, and even performance painting and live cinema.”<sup>16</sup> [ The idea of a structural analogy based on the model of

12 [

Ibid., p. 60.

13 [

See their “Call for Entries 2015,” <http://www.visual-music-award.de/index.cfm?siteid=7> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

14 [

Jack Ox and Cindy Keefer, “On Curating Recent Digital Abstract Visual Music,” authored for The New York Digital Salon’s Abstract Visual Music catalogue and website, slight revision, 2008, [http://www.centerforvisualmusic.org/Ox\\_Keefer\\_VM.htm](http://www.centerforvisualmusic.org/Ox_Keefer_VM.htm) (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

15 [

Ibid.

16 [

Fox-Gieg, Keefer, Schedel, “Editorial” (see note 6), p. 98.

musical composition is stressed in many definitions coming from a background of music and musicology. 17 [ According to the musicologist Maura McDonnell, visual music productions can put an emphasis either on the “craft of composition” or on the “performance aspect.” 18 [ Whether the performance is based on analog instruments or realtime controllers, it should still obey the rules that structure music. 19 [ These considerations consequently lead McDonnell to define visual music as “an area of activity that comes under the broad area of sonic arts.” 20 [ This might come as a surprise for those who have always been looking at visual music from the perspective of the visual arts or film, with Kandinsky’s paintings or the films of Oskar Fischinger, Len Lye, and Mary Ellen Bute as historical references in mind. Many attempts to define visual music—whether they tend to stress the compositional or transpositional aspect or favor other forms of sound-image relations—privilege neither of its ingredients and see it as something new that emerges from the combination of image and sound. The authors may differ as to what this third entity is to be called, a “medium” 21 [ or an “art form,” 22 [ for example, but they generally agree that the objective of visual music productions is an interaction, or even an “evenly balanced or equilibrated interplay between visual and acoustic components,” 23 [ leading to an effect that neither of the two components would have produced alone. 24 [ This idea of

17 [

See for example Maura McDonnell, “Visual Music,” in: Visual Music Marathon, New York: Northeastern University, 2009, pp. 2–20; or Friedemann Dähn, “Visual Music: Forms and Possibilities,” in: Lund and Lund, Audio.Visual (see note 9), pp. 152f.

18 [

McDonnell, “Visual Music” (see note 17), p. 18.

19 [

ibid., p. 12.

20 [

Maura McDonnell: “Visual Music: A Composition of the Things Themselves,” based on a paper presented at the Sounding Out 5 conference, Bournemouth University, 2010, [http://www.academia.edu/525221/Visual\\_Music\\_-\\_A\\_Composition\\_Of\\_The\\_Things\\_Themselves](http://www.academia.edu/525221/Visual_Music_-_A_Composition_Of_The_Things_Themselves) (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

21 [

Shirley Clarke quoted in Peter Weibel, “Von der visuellen Musik zum Musikvideo,” in: Bódy and Weibel, Clip, Klapp, Bum (see note 1), p. 53.

22 [

Dähn, “Visual Music” (see note 17), p. 149.

23 [

Cornelia Lund and Holger Lund: “Editorial,” in: Lund and Lund, Audio.Visual (see note 9), p. 12.

24 [

Comparable ideas can be found in numerous texts, e.g. Dähn, “Visual Music,” (see note 17), p. 153; Weibel, “Von der visuellen Musik zum Musikvideo” (see note 21), p. 53; John Whitney jr., Digital Harmony: On the Complementarity of Music and Visual Art, Peterborough, NH: McGraw-Hill, 1980,

sound and image coming together to form a new audiovisual entity clearly reflects Dick Higgins' concept of "intermedia" as the merging of two art forms, or media, to form a new one, the "intermedium." 25 [ ↑ Seen historically, this proximity to the concept of "intermedia" points us to the 1960s, when visual music enjoyed its second strong wave. While the idea of synaesthesia, strongly associated with the early experiments in visual music in the first decades of the 20th century, had not become completely obsolete, visual music was now part of the larger context of "expanded arts." The third wave of visual music, which is linked to the advent of realtime technologies, has embraced these historical concepts and adjusted them to the contemporary field. Due to the dual nature of visual music, the protagonists of the discipline, theoreticians and producers, have always come from different backgrounds, mostly music and the visual arts, experimental film, and, in more recent digital times, from architecture, media, or even game design. Although few of the participants in our online survey have declared themselves to be visual music artists (see p. 71), the international community is very active, gathering in the "Visual Music Village" or around the "Center for Visual Music" and the "Visual Music Archive," 26 [ and meeting at festivals and conferences 27 [ dedicated to visual music. Geographically, this community spreads around the world, with strong centers in the English-speaking countries, especially the

p. 91. Interestingly, Eva Fischer takes up exactly the same ideas for the definition of what she calls “audiovisual art”: “Aus A + V wird ein drittes Ganzes = AV” (A + V become a third entity = AV). Eva Fischer, Audiovisuelle Kunst. Entwicklung eines Begriffes. VJing, audiovisuelle Live Performance und Installation im Kontext kunsthistorischer und zeitgenössischer Entwicklungen, Saarbrücken: AV Akademiker Verlag, 2014, p. 100. See also there, p. 95.

25 [

Dick Higgins, “Intermedia,” Something Else Newsletter, vol. 1, no. 1, New York: Something Else Press, 1966.

26 [

See <http://visualmusic.ning.com/>, <http://www.centerforvisualmusic.org/>, and <http://visualmusicarchive.org/>.

27 [

It is impossible to give an exhaustive list here. Some examples are the Understanding Visual Music Conference (Montreal 2011; Buenos Aires 2013), the CAMP International Festival for Visual Music (<http://www.camp-festival.de>), and the Visual Music Award (<http://www.visual-music-award.de>).

US and Canada, in Europe, especially in Germany, and with growing activities in South America. These geographical centers do not come as a surprise, as visual music, born in the context of the historical avant-gardes, was initially based on the principles of Western art music. ¶ When we look at the parameters discussed above, it appears quite unexpected that a rather clearly defined concept like visual music should suddenly start sprawling all over the field of artistic audiovisual production. Why is the concept used so inflationarily, and what is it that makes it so attractive? On the one hand, by declaring a piece to be “visual music,” its producers inscribe it into an acknowledged avant-garde tradition in music and/or the visual arts with a lineage of well-known artistic examples, on the other hand, the label “visual music” implicitly maintains that sound and image come together in a meaningful way. Hence, filing an audiovisual piece or a festival, for example, under “visual music” might help to suggest a certain relevance, just by affiliation. ^ This is not to say, of course, that visual music has become an empty label. Following the definitions discussed above, the central point of visual music is, indeed, the quality of the audiovisual combination, which can be achieved by different means, such as a structural reference to musical composition, by transcoding sound into image or vice versa, or by performing sound and image according to the rules of (musical) impro-



visation. The result of this audiovisual combination should be a new, genuinely audiovisual product. “Medium” and “intermedium” are some of the terms that have already been cited as possible labels for this product. Following the idea of “intermedium,” which is, however, firmly based in the discursive context of the 1960s, it seems tempting to take up a concept which addresses more directly the relations of media under the sign of the digital: the “metamedium,” as the result of an “active” mix of media, as opposed to multimedia seen as a mere addition of media.<sup>28</sup> [ While the concept of the metamedium describes how media work together, it doesn’t address specific aspects of audiovisual combination in visual music. So maybe another concept is needed, one that is based on the description of characteristics, such as the concept of genre. The short definition we have just developed—complemented by descriptive terms like “mostly abstract” and “non-narrative”—could serve as the basis for a genre definition. The only problem is that beyond this minimal definition, everything is very flexible about visual music.<sup>29</sup> [ Unorthodox combinations of media have always been characteristic of it and have become even more so now with the post-digital mixes of media—a usage of media constituting a challenge in terms of genre definition, even for a transmedial perspective on genres. Moreover, the concept of visual music doesn’t point to a certain form of presentation, a context, or a technical support—

## 28 [

Taking Lev Manovich and Alan Kay as a starting point, this idea is further developed in Jamie O'Neil, "Mix/Remix as Epistemology: The Implications of the Metamedium, Digital Media," 2006, [http://www.jamieoneil.net/images/oneil\\_remix\\_epist.pdf](http://www.jamieoneil.net/images/oneil_remix_epist.pdf) (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

## 29 [

In her as yet unpublished presentation "Visual Music: Aspects of a Non-Genre" (held at the conference "Experimental Settings," Universidade de São Paulo, June 20, 2013), the author discusses visual music as a (non-) genre, precisely because, on the one hand, visual music seems to follow the logics of a genre: when we read about a visual music event, we probably have a more or less clear idea of what to expect, a combination of sound and (moving) images, the latter probably more or less abstract. Historical references such as Oskar Fischinger or Len Lye might come to our minds. On the other hand, as we have also shown in this text, the boundaries of visual music have become so wobbly that it loses all contour and—even if we take into account that definitions are necessarily dynamic and open—it becomes rather a non-genre.

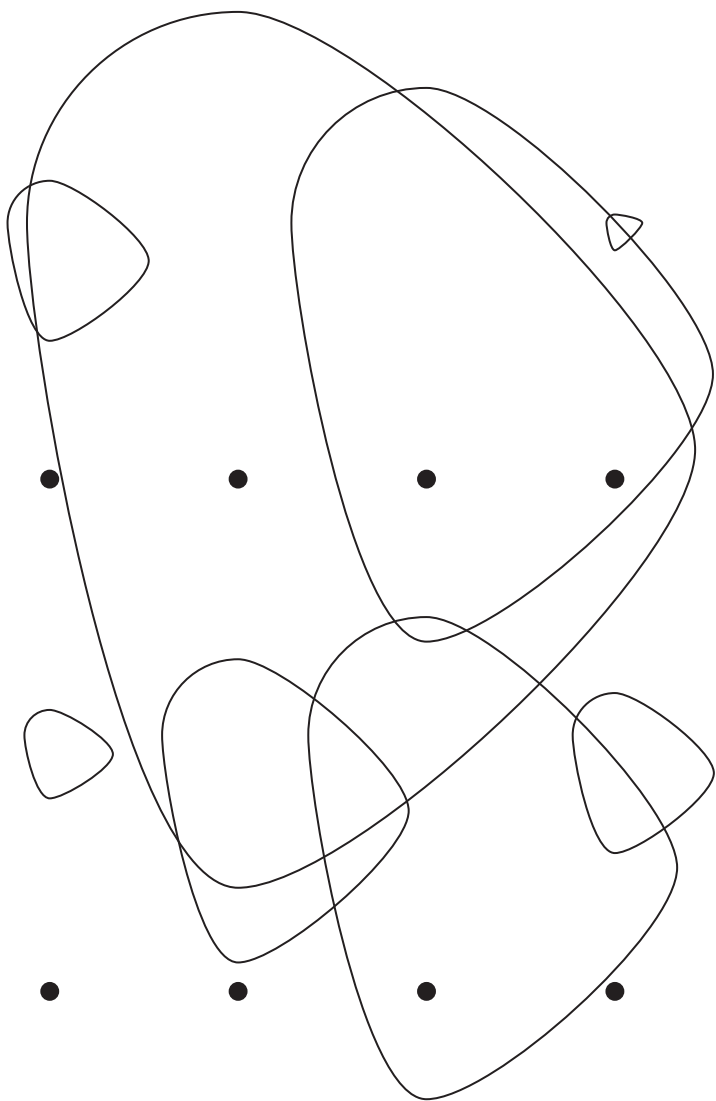
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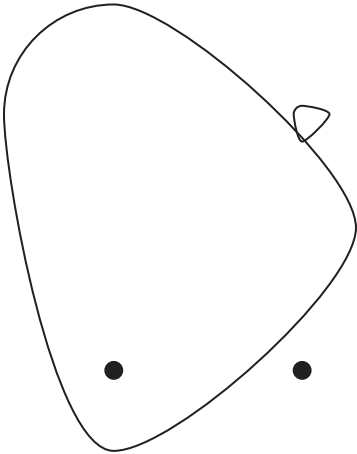
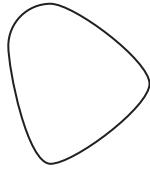
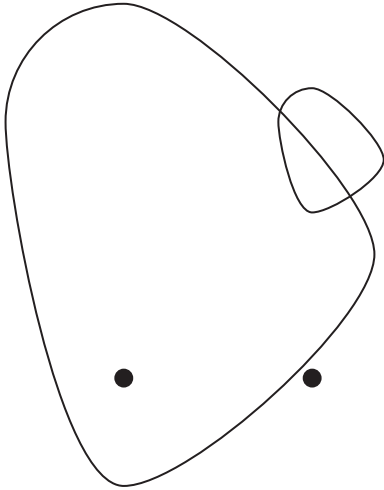
all parameters that the other concepts discussed in this book address. In return, however, these concepts all can be visual music, even if only partly, when the combination of audio and video is organized accordingly.



“I think art, research, and any other mode of expression should get involved with the community, complementing the work with talks, workshops, etc.”

Do you have any further statements on audiovisual art you want to share with us?





1. The task of defining expanded cinema is as much a needed enterprise, which might help to shed light on current debates surrounding the so-called “cinematic turn”<sup>2</sup> [ in contemporary art, as it is a vexed one, for—and that is what I would like to argue in this paper—the very spectrum of practices it describes resists attempts at producing clear definitions. Not only is “expanded cinema” merely a name among others to describe forms of work and artistic practices whose nature is hybrid and cuts across media, it also always refers to a dynamic field made up of struggling concepts and objects. As its heterogeneous genealogies and its openness to plural becomings suggest, the category of expanded cinema itself is—no pun intended—subject to expansion. In the wake of contemporary debates on multi-screen and immersive video and filmic installations that place these genres within a historical continuity with expanded cinema (alongside an analogous questioning of the links between contemporary artists’ films and videos and the video art which emerged in the 1960s, or between the former and avant-garde film), a possible “definition” of expanded film practices emerges from a position oscillating between historicism, from which unfold multiple genealogies (and by extension a form of relativism as to the different fields and discourses), and a

1 [

The title of this essay paraphrases Pavle Levi's Cinema by Other Means, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

2 [

On the “cinematic turn” see: Eivind Røssaak (ed.), Between Stillness and Motion: Film, Photography, Algorithms, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011, pp. 109–156.



kind of media essentialism which de-historicizes and transposes a medium and the sensible regimes it structures across contexts. The question of defining what the modalities of expansion entail in the sphere of film practice depends on their belonging and/or participation<sup>3</sup> [ in the planes of visibility, spatiality, temporality, performativity, and affect. One would also have to consider how they are negotiated among the arts, their articulations around the tensions between the discourses of medium specificity, intermediality, and post-mediality, and the dialectics of ideation and materiality through which a work comes into being.

● ● This confusion of terms, which asserts a direct filiation between contemporary installation art involving multiple screens and expanded cinema, has been criticized by German film theorist Volker Pantenburg. For him, to posit expanded cinema as the predecessor of installation art relies on the denial of several parameters. First, the notion of “expansion” is reduced to its spatial dimension; second, it is based on a misunderstanding regarding the modalities of mobility and the temporalities of experience, respectively in the spheres of experimental cinema and contemporary art; third, a misapprehension regarding the institutional and economic structures of production and reception of moving image works (roughly the film coop model vs. the museum); finally, what he calls an “asymmetry of discursive capacities,” that is, a monopolizing of critical discourse mediated

## 3 [

The idea that a (literary) genre can participate in multiple genres without belonging to any one of them was developed by Jacques Derrida in “The Law of Genre,” *Glyph* 7 (Spring 1980,) pp. 202–229.. If we keep the idea of participation without belonging in mind, Derrida’s focus on linguistic effects at the cost of concrete objects is for us highly problematic. Indeed, while we would like to describe similar processes, these are to be found in the way such modalities of participation are (re-)mediated through apparatuses that distribute objects, discourses, and technologies within specific spatial and temporal situations.

by the art world through the medium of the catalogue.<sup>4</sup> [ Although Pantenburg can be criticized for being overly schematic and for failing to account for the many historical cases of exchanges between expanded cinema and the art world as well as the numerous precedents aimed at integrating cinema as part of the visual arts, it is useful to keep these parameters in mind to think about the ways expanded cinema is discussed. Thus we might better understand the conditions under which expanded cinema can (or cannot) be reactualized in different contexts, as well as the relationships it entertains with formally similar practices—in our case: live audiovisual performance, VJing, visual music, and live cinema. ✱— 2. The “spatial misunderstanding,” as Pantenburg calls it, has to be placed in its historical dimension. It is Gene Youngblood’s conception of expanded cinema in his eponymous book<sup>5</sup> [ that has come to act as canonical reference. Here it becomes necessary to quote the definition Youngblood gives in his preface: “When we say expanded cinema we actually mean expanded consciousness. Expanded cinema does not mean computer films, video phosphors, atomic light, or spherical projections. Expanded cinema isn’t a movie at all: like if it’s a process of becoming, man’s ongoing historical drive to manifest his consciousness outside of his mind, in front of his eyes. One no longer can specialize in a single discipline and hope truthfully to express a clear picture of its relationships in the environment.

This is especially true in the case of the intermedia network of cinema and television, which now functions as nothing less than the nervous system of mankind.”<sup>6</sup> [ § When Youngblood describes a rich spectrum of audiovisual situations—ranging from what he terms a “synaesthetic cinema,” which includes Carolee Schneemann’s *Fuses* (1965), John Whitney’s computer film *Catalogue* (1961), experiments by the Alwin Nikolais Dance Company with WCBS-TV, or seminal “intermedia” environments like Aldo Tambellini’s *Back Zero* (1965)—for him expanded cinema is a media ecology that exceeds the realms of art and film. The image-making technologies he discusses are inscribed within a cybernetic utopia, corollary to what he sees as a general anthropological mutation. The latter is enabled by the rise of an intermedia culture, following the collective USCO’s definition endorsed by Youngblood: “The simultaneous use of various media to create a total environmental experience for the audience. Meaning is communicated not by coding ideas into abstract literary language, but by creating an emotionally real experience through the use of audiovisual technology. Originally conceived in the realm of art rather than in science or engineering, the principles on which intermedia is based are grounded in the fields of psychology, information theory, and communication engineering.”<sup>7</sup> [ ● Hence, not only does the intermedial nature of expanded cinema bring into crisis the medium-specificity of the

4 [

Volker Pantenburg, "1970 and Beyond. Experimental Cinema and Installation Art," in: Gertrud Koch, Volker Pantenburg, Simon Rothöhler (eds.), [Screen Dynamics: Mapping the Borders of Cinema](#), Vienna: Synema, 2012, pp. 78–92.

5 [

Gene Youngblood, [Expanded Cinema](#), London: Studio Vista, 1970.

6 [

*Ibid.*, p. 41.

7 [

*Ibid.*, p. 348.

8 [

Most notably in: Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," [Art and Literature](#) 4 (Spring 1965), reprinted in: Francis Francina and Charles Harrison (eds.), [Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology](#), London: Harper & Row, 1982, pp. 5–10.

9 [

Reproduced in Astrit Schmidt-Burkhardt, [Maciunas' "Learning Machines": From Art History to a Chronology of Fluxus](#), Vienna/ New York: Springer, 2003, pp. 18f.

10 [

Dick Higgins, "Intermedia," [Something Else Press Newsletter](#), vol. 1, no. 1, New York: Something Else Press, 1966. The founding of Something Else Press by Higgins marks his departure from the Fluxus network. See for instance: Cuauhtémoc Medina, "The 'Kulturbolschewiken' I: Fluxus, the Abolition of Art, the Soviet Union, and 'Pure Amusement,'" [RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics](#) 48 (Autumn 2005), pp. 179–192. It is also noteworthy for the discussion on the uses of the concepts of expanded cinema and intermedia and their relationships

that in Japan, after the term *intermedia* (*Intāmedia* in Japanese) had first been officially used for the “Intermedia” festival at the Runami Gallery in Ginza, Tokyo, in May 1967, it quickly became synonymous with “cinematic projection that refuses to comply to the rules of normative projection” and was discussed by artists and critics such as Yasunao Tone, Juzo Ishiko, or Miyabi Ichikawa. For a discussion of expanded cinema practices in Japan, see: Julian Ross, “Site and Specificity in Japanese Expanded Cinema: Intermedia and its Development in the late 60s,” *Décadrages* 21–22 (Winter 2012); online at: <http://www.decadrages.ch/site-and-specificity-japanese-expanded-cinema-intermedia-and-its-development-late-60s-julian-ross> (accessed Sep 1, 2015). If in Japan expanded cinema was discussed in relation to its North-American definition, in the UK, most specifically in the films and performances made in the framework of the London Filmmakers Cooperative, another and almost oppositional kind of expanded cinema emerged. Influenced by Bertolt Brecht’s theories of estrangement and distancing effects, and articulated in Peter Gidal’s formulation of a “structuralist-materialist film,” expanded cinema in London sought a rigorous and analytical deconstruction of the film apparatus and of its technological elements as well as a radical exploration of spectatorial viewing conventions, contrasting with the technophile utopianism of Youngblood. See Malcolm Le Grice, “Digital Cinema and Experimental Film” [1999], in: *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age*, London: BFI, 2001, p. 319. Youngblood’s conception was also criticized by Deke Dusinberre in his introduction to the catalogue of the Festival of Expanded Cinema at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in 1976, a critique embodied in the curatorial choices of the committee of this institutional exhibition of (mostly British) expanded cinema. Dusinberre stated that Youngblood’s eclecticism was “combined on the cinematic level with a technological fetish

which equated cinema with the expanded consciousness available through expanded technology. As such, it yielded a synthesis with occasional connotations of psychedelia, and the resultant fascination with the new perception tended to overlook the actual aesthetic implications of both the original and the expanded perception [...]. Thus the critical criteria on which the committee attempted to base its selections centered on the creative use of the projection event and the possibilities offered by the facilities at the ICA; the selected pieces tend to emphasize either the physical, spatial, or temporal aspects of these creative possibilities to facilitate such a perceptual shift.” Deke Dusinberre, “Festival of Expanded Cinema: An Introduction,” The Festival of Expanded Cinema at the ICA, London January 4–11th 1976, London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1976, unpag.

## 11 [

In recent years, renewed scholarly and curatorial interest for the history of the avant-gardes and neo avant-gardes has led to several books and catalogues about the history of expanded cinema and related practices. For writings that specifically address expanded cinema see: A. L. Rees, Duncan White, Steven Ball, David Curtis (eds.), Expanded Cinema: Art, Performance, Film, London: Tate Publishing, 2011; Lucy Reynolds, British avant-garde women filmmakers and expanded cinema of the 1970s, unpublished PhD thesis, University of East London, 2011; Andrew V. Uroskie, Between the Black Box and the White Cube: Expanded Cinema and Postwar Art, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014; and in French: François Bovier and Adeena Mey (eds.), “Cinéma élargi,” Décadrages 21–22, Lausanne: Publications universitaires romandes, 2012. For published works that place expanded cinema in relation to contemporary moving image work or artists’ film and video at large, see respectively: Maeve Conolly, The Place of Artists’

modernist work of art as advocated by Clement Greenberg.<sup>8</sup> [ The interdisciplinarity of its intellectual determinations furthermore undermines artistic autonomy, both on the level of the work itself and on that of the artistic institution. Also, expanded cinema conceived as both a theoretical proposition and as a set of artistic and media practices emerged as part of a larger dynamic of expansion of the arts—set against what was discussed in terms of a crisis of modernism and of aesthetic autonomy—as best exemplified by the visualized art-historical genealogy of George Maciunas' Expanded Arts Diagram (1966)<sup>9</sup> [ and in Dick Higgins' essay "Intermedia."<sup>10</sup> [ ● 3. Among recent scholarship on expanded cinema,<sup>11</sup> [ Jonathan Walley's writings stand as some of the most eloquent. He posits film practices that place film outside of the "standard" apparatus in the context of anti-Greenbergian strategies, through his concept of "paracinema," which he developed to discuss works such as Anthony McCall's *Line Describing a Cone* (1973). For Walley, "paracinema identifies an array of phenomena that are considered 'cinematic' but that are not embodied in the materials of film as traditionally defined. That is, the film works I am addressing recognize cinematic properties outside the standard film apparatus, and therefore reject the medium-specific premise of most essentialist theory and practice that the art form of cinema is defined by the specific medium of film."<sup>12</sup> [ Ö α Å ® ë ý Ā α Ę



Cinema: Space, Site and Screen, Bristol / Chicago: Intellect Books, 2009; Tanya Leighton (ed.), Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader, London: Tate Publishing/Afterall, 2008; Kate Mondloch, Screens: Viewing Media Installation Art, Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. As part of a movement toward the historicization of expanded cinema and its understanding, in relation to other artistic practices that use projected images or which have a performative dimension, through restagings or reconstructions of historical artworks, see the catalogues: Chrissie Iles (ed.), Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964–1977, New York: H. N. Abrams, 2001; Matthias Michalka (ed.), X-Screen: Film Installations and Actions in the 1960s and 1970s, Vienna: MUMOK, 2004; Christopher Eamon (ed.), Anthony McCall: The Solid Light Films and Related Works, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005; Joachim Jäger (ed.), Beyond Cinema, the Art of Projection: Films, Videos and Installations from 1963 to 2005, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2006. For a re-reading of the histories of minimalism in which expanded cinema appears in a network of art practices, complicates canonical readings, and departs from conventional art and film historical categories (minimalism, structural film, conceptual art) see: Branden W. Joseph, Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage, New York: Zone Books, 2008, also his The Roh and the Cooked: Tony Conrad and Beverly Grant in Europe, Berlin: August Verlag, 2011.

## 12 [

Jonathan Walley, "The Material of Film and the Idea of Cinema: Contrasting Practices in Sixties and Seventies Avant-Garde Film," October 103 (Winter 2003,) pp.15–30. Walley's definition borrows from Ken Jacobs, who coined the term "paracinema" to describe his performative pieces known as Shadow Play and Nervous Magic Lantern, which use no celluloid or involve multiple projections. See Lindley Hanlon,

Walley's distinction between cinema as an idea and its "materials" (and therefore its materiality and physical existence) enables him to bring what he names paracinema close to conceptual art, in that—following Lucy Lippard's formula of a "dematerialization of the art object" 13 [ —it "dematerializes" cinema from its medium, equated here with the situation described by traditional apparatus theory. 14 [ If Walley's heuristic claims to locate "cinematic properties" and identify film outside of the movie theater are praiseworthy, he does so at the price of reiterating, as George Baker rightly points out, "a false and ultimately Platonic separation of 'matter' and 'idea' that is one of the most common and banal of the misreadings to which so-called Conceptual art has been repeatedly subjected." 15 [ ÷ As a matter of fact, the paracinematic strategies described by Walley, which take part in the spectrum of inter-media practices and of the expansion of the arts, consist more in a process of rematerialization than dematerialization, a set of movements through which "cinema" unfolds in the form of multiple materialities, as they appear in Pavle Levi's precise analysis of a Cinema by Other Means. 16 [ Levi's argument is set out using as case studies a range of little known Yugoslavian avant-garde works, such as the "written films" of the Hypnist and Zenitist movements active in the 1920s, or 1970s experiments with the physicality of film (Nikola Djuric's Remembrance from 1978; Tomislav Gotovac's

"Kenneth Jacobs, Interviewed by Lindley Hanlon (Jerry Sims Present), April 9, 1974," Film Culture 67–69 (1979), p. 65–86.

13 [

Lucy R. Lippard, John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," Art International vol. 12, no. 2 (February 1968), pp. 31–36.

14 [

Jean-Louis Baudry, Alan Williams, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," Film Quarterly vol. 28, no. 2 (Winter 1974–1975), pp. 39–47.

15 [

See George Baker, "Film Beyond Its Limits," Grey Room 25 (Fall 2006), pp. 92–125.

16 [

Pavle Levi, Cinema by Other Means (see note 1).

17 [

*Ibid.*, p. 27.

18 [

*Ibid.*

19 [

*Ibid.*

It's all a movie as documented in a photography by Ivan Posavec in 1979). Hence, "cinema by other means" relates to "the practice of positing cinema as a system of relations directly inspired by the workings of the film apparatus, but evoked through the material and technological properties of the originally nonfilmic media." 17 [ × × × In Levi's argument, the "medium" thus appears as both a concept ("a nexus of different elements, understood and/or imagined as capable of generating specific effects") and an actual apparatus ("as concrete technology embodying this nexus of relations"). 18 [ ∅ Finally, to render his definition as synthetical as possible, he makes the point that "cinema by other means" suggests a "conceptualization of the cinema as itself a type of practice that, since the invention of the film apparatus, has also (simultaneously) had a history of execution through other, often 'older,' artistic media." 19 [ By extension, we could say that in Pavle Levi's reformulation of film history, "cinema" and "cinema by other means" always coexisted. Δ Debates in film history can be divided, schematically, into two different types of explanation, according to the philosopher Gabriel Rockhill and his study of the "coordinates" of the debate. The first type is technological. From this point of view, the birth of cinema in the 19th century was enabled by emerging technical possibilities of fixing, projecting, and reproducing movement as an optical phenomenon. Such possibilities had as corollary

the scientific understanding of the phenomena themselves. The second explanation is “notional” and is based, roughly, on the idea that the material technologies of cinema could only be designed within a favorable intellectual context. Hence, in this schema, idea precedes technology,<sup>20</sup> [ and, by extension, cinema by other means can be said to articulate these two vectors—technological and notional—in a dynamic process. ₹ 4. What we identify under the labels of expanded cinema, paracinema, and cinema by other means can be subsumed into two other categories, that of Sergei Eisenstein’s notion of “cinematism” and of Karel Teige’s “poetism.” The idea of cinematism emphasizes fundamental principles of cinematic art such as montage and movement and identifies forms of cinema that unfold outside of traditional filmic material, embodied in other arts, such as painting, architecture, drawing, or literature. Hence, as film historian François Albera has written, through the concept of cinematism, Eisenstein could see in cinema “a way to go beyond art (from a diachronic perspective) and, by the same token, a kind of general model to understand all the arts (from a synchronic perspective).”<sup>21</sup> [ If indeed cinematism both serves to identify objects that open up film to the world at large and offers a tool to think of the latter in cinematic terms, the problem remains that “cinema” still acts as the frame of reference; we might call “cine-centrism” the conceptual foundation upon which the idea of

20 [

Gabriel Rockhill, "Le cinéma n'est jamais né," Revue Appareil 1 (2008), <https://appareil.revues.org/130> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

21 [

François Albera, "Introduction," in: S. M. Eisenstein, Cinématisme: Peinture et cinéma, Dijon: Kargo/Les presses du réel, 2009, p. 11.

cinematism is built. Formulating the contours of an a-foundational frame to think about expanded cinema would exceed the present essay. But, as a first step, we can suggest at least one element toward the multiplication of heuristic tools through which we can rethink and recast expanded cinema and its multiple means, and that is poetism. Coined and theorized by the Czech avant-garde artist and critic Karel Teige, poetism identified a spectrum of work in poetry and painting that had managed to break from, respectively, literature and representation, and eventually provided a conception of art cutting across disciplines and embraced modern life at large.<sup>22</sup> [ ✨— As Teige put it: “We have created pictorial poems: compositions of real colors and shapes within the system of the poem. The animated pictorial poem: photogenic poetry. Kinography. We have tried to formulate a proposal for a new art of film—pure cinematography, photogenic poetry, a dynamic picture without precedent. Luminous and glittering poems of undulating light—we saw in them the leading art of our epoch: the magnificent synthetic time-space poem, exciting all the senses and all the sensitive areas of the viewer via sight. We defined film as a dynamic pictorial poem, a living spectacle without plot or literature; black-and-white rhythms and possibly the rhythm of color too; a sort of mechanical ballet of shapes and light that demonstrates its innate affinity with light shows, pure dance, the art of fireworks (and the art of

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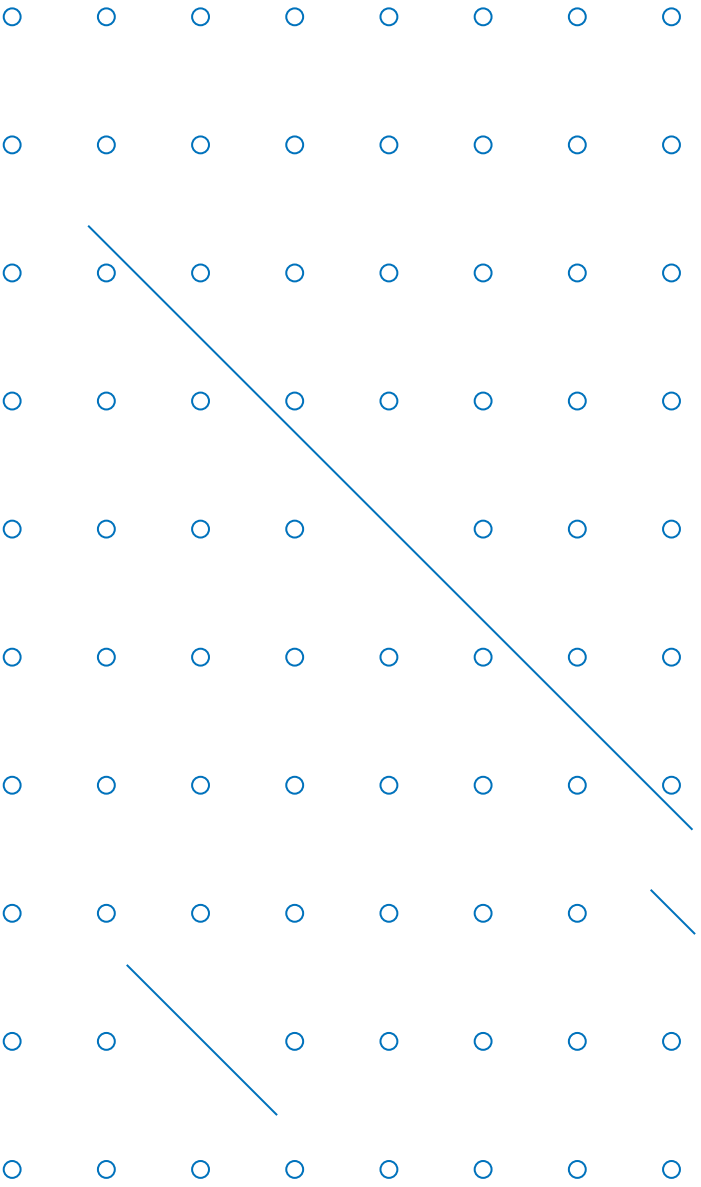
Among the many elements inspiring poetism, Peter A. Zusi cites “film, jazz, and circuses, and even [...] activities such as tourism and athletics.” Peter A. Zusi, “The Style of the Present: Karel Teige on Constructivism and Poetism,” Representations 88 (2004), p. 103. I am here willfully taking the formulation of poetism out of its historical context—where it stands, according to Teige, in a dialectical relationship with constructivism—to use it as a tool to rethink the objects addressed in this essay.





23 [

Karel Teige, "Poetism Manifesto," in: Timothy O. Benson and Eva Forgacs (eds.), Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-gardes, 1910–1930, Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002, pp. 598f.



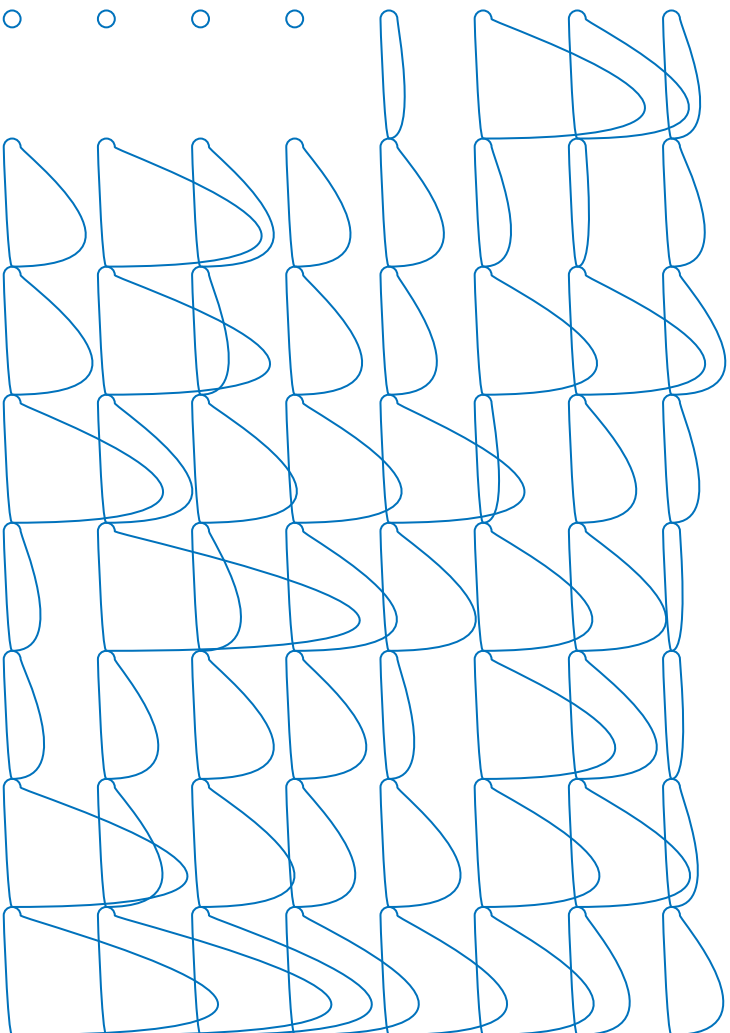
Do you see yourself as an artist?

77.4% Yes

18.9% It depends

3.8% No

Question 2



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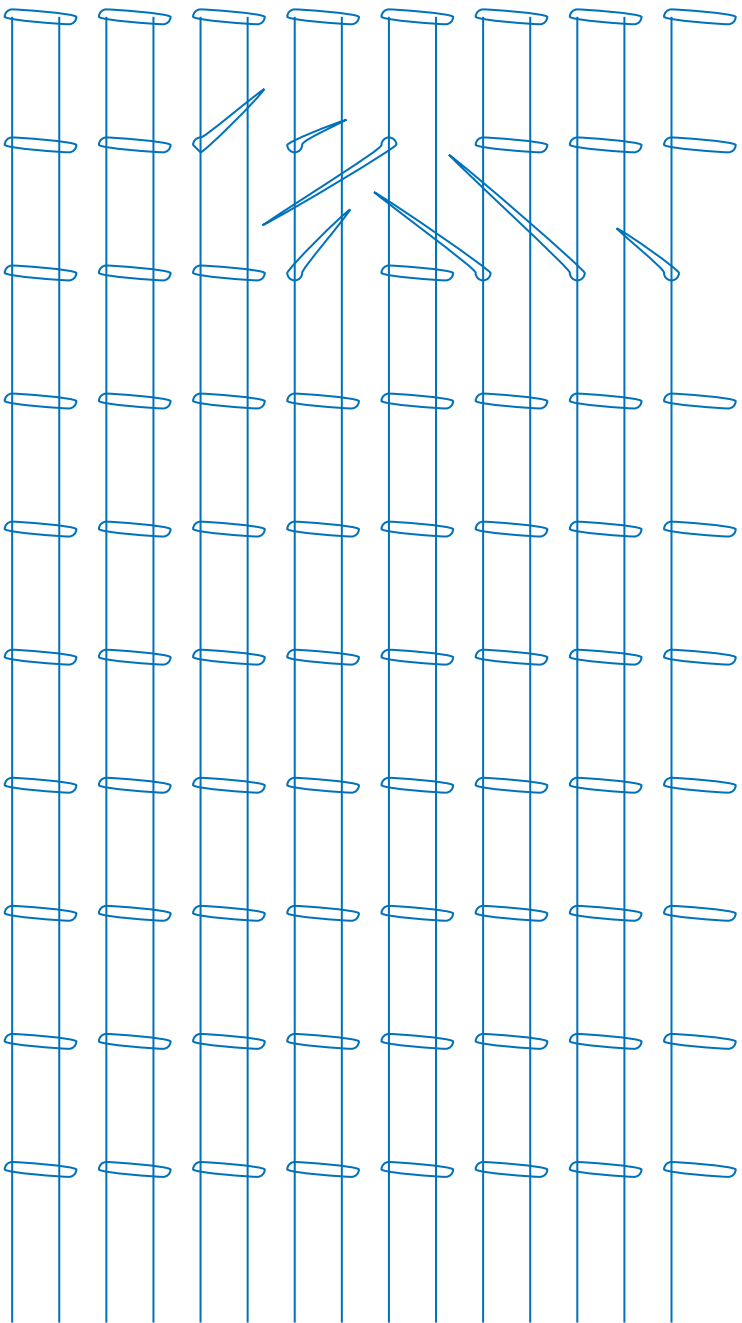
○

If yes: do you see yourself as  
a performer/ performance artist?

85.7% Yes

14.3% No

Question 3

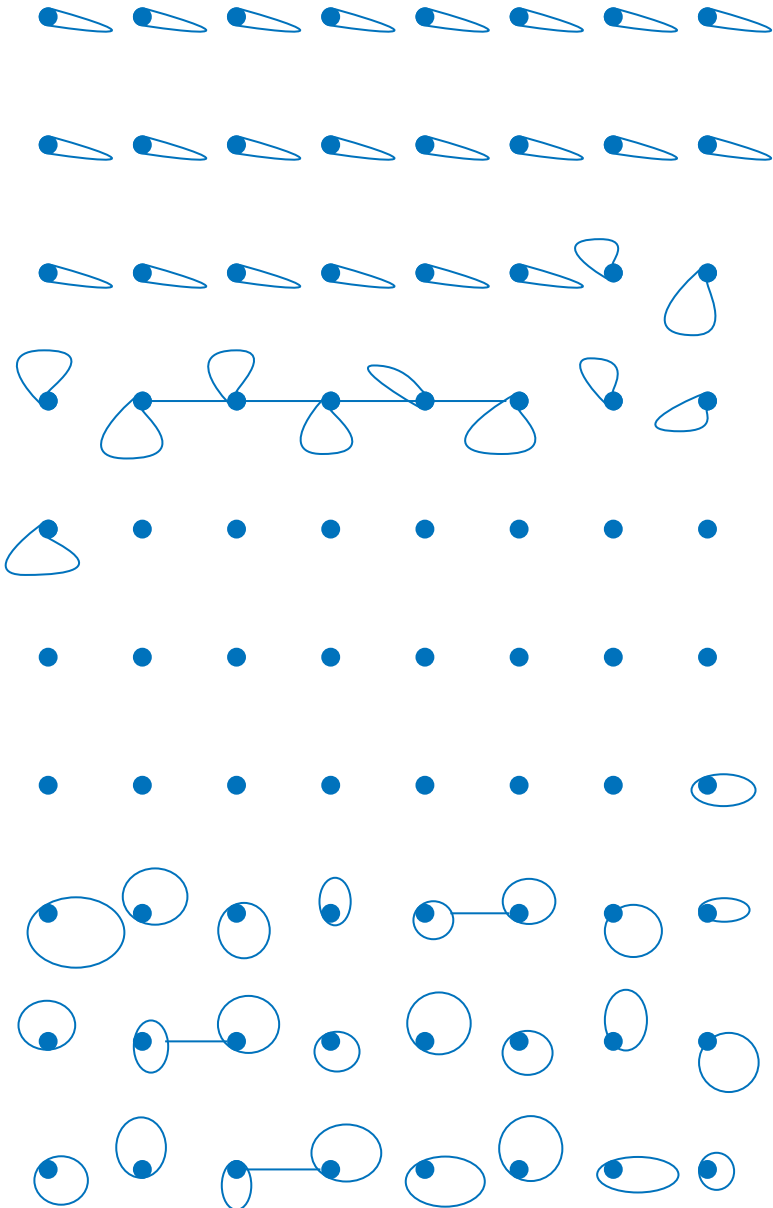


Do you create audiovisual artworks  
e.g. for art exhibitions (installations,  
video art, etc.)?

92.5% Yes

7.5% No





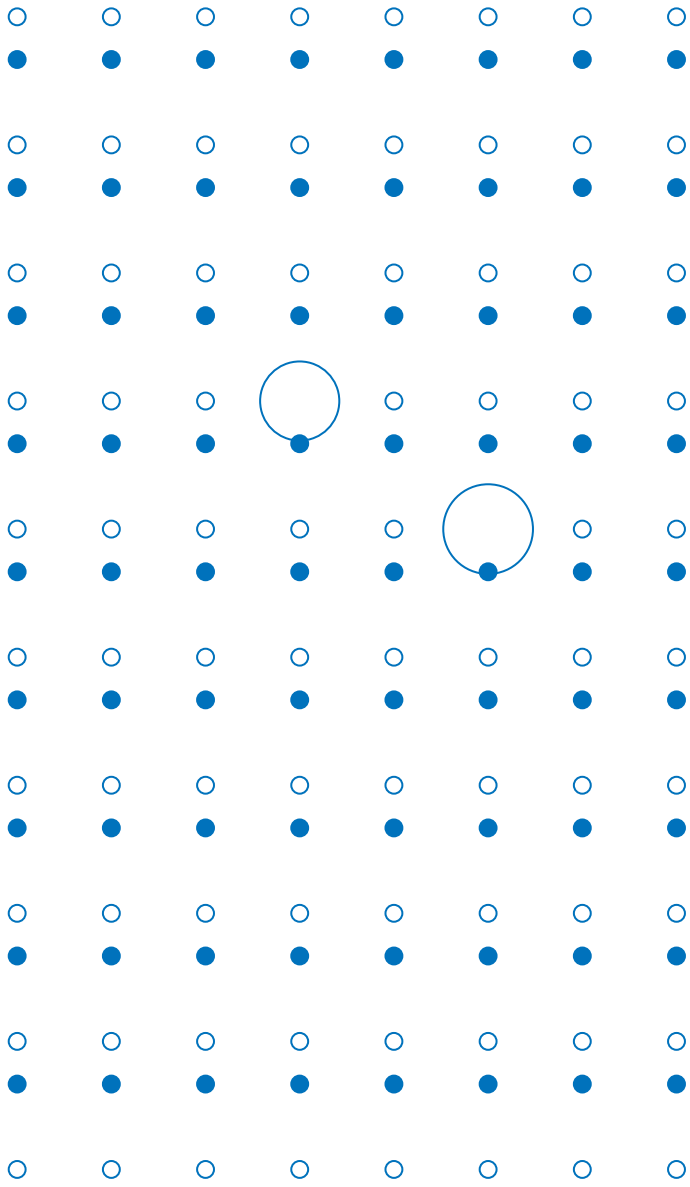
Do you produce analog artworks e.g. for the fine art market (prints, video stills, etc.)?

28.3% No

28.3% Yes, for the fine art market

28.3% Yes, for other purposes

15.1% Yes, for commercial customers



Do you write and/or publish  
theoretical texts about (your)  
audiovisual work?

52.8% No

47.2% Yes

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\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Which of these terms applies best to your work (short definition supplied)?

- 59.6% Live Audiovisual Performance
- 19.2% Other definitions
- 11.5% VJing
- 7.7% Expanded Cinema
- 1.9% Visual Music
- 0% Live Cinema



Which words or definitions do you use to describe yourself as an artist/performer?

49.1% Other

41.5% Visual Artist

32.1% VJ

28.3% Media Artist

17% AV Act

15.1% Visualist

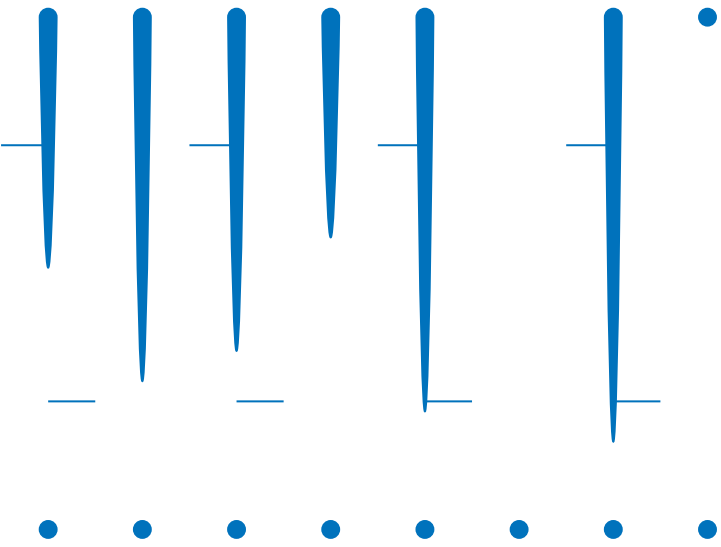
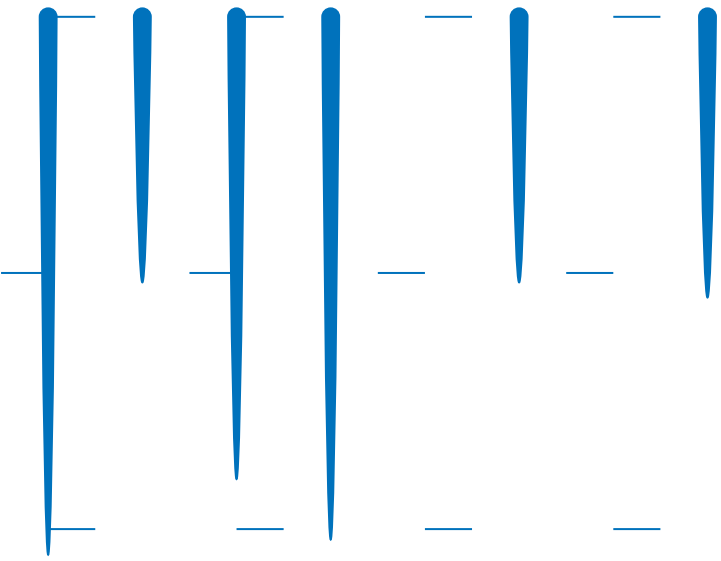
7.6% Projectionist

5.7% Live Cinema Artist



multiple answers possible

Question 8



Which fields are fundamental to your work?

69.8% Music

67.9% Video

60.4% Performance

54.7% Video Mixing Software

50.9% Animation

47.2% Motion Graphics

43.4% Light

35.9% Photography

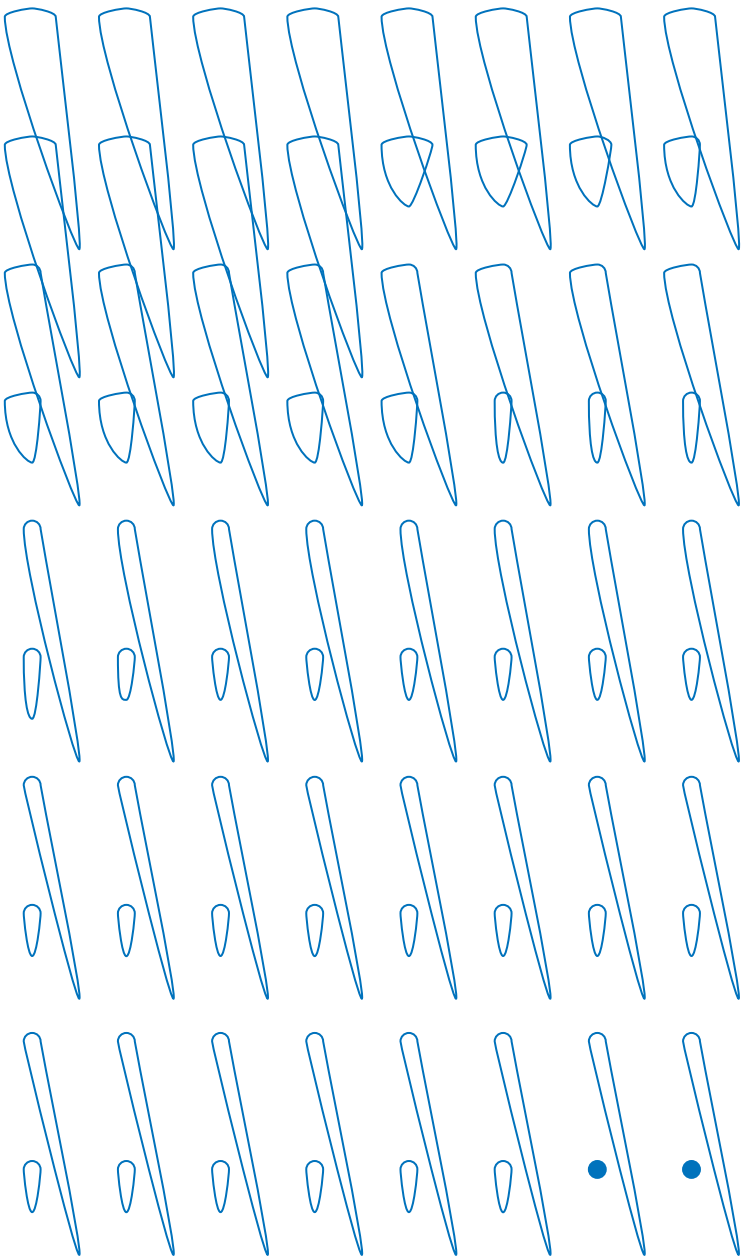
34% Film

34% Generative Software

32.1% Graphic Design

28.3% Other

multiple answers possible



Question 9

Do you prefer any context  
or location to show your work?

54.7% Club

52.8% Other

50.9% Art Gallery

43.4% Museum

35.9% Theater

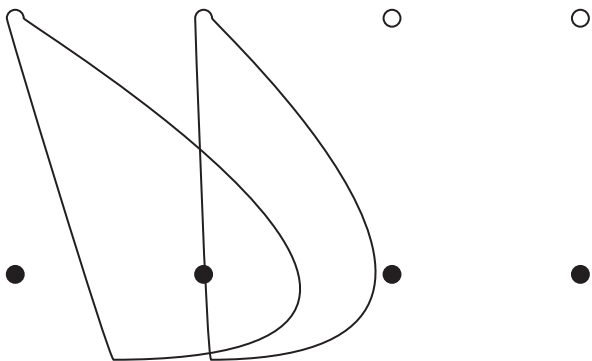
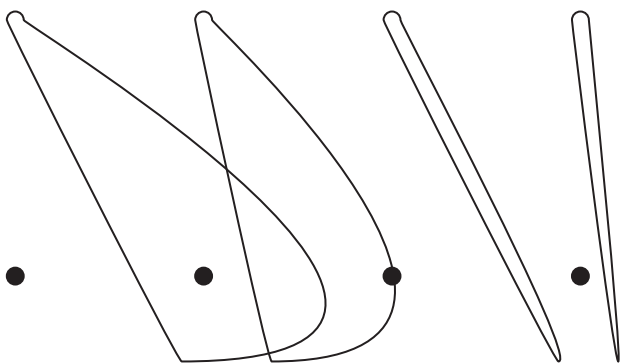
20.8% Cinema

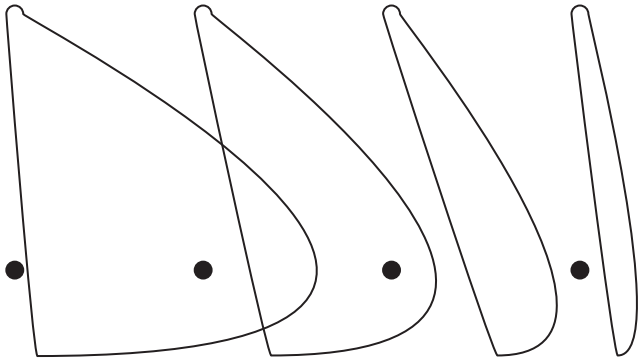
18.9% Commercial Event

“Clubs offer the opportunity to experiment, to communicate with the audience spontaneously, to improvise, to interact with the music and the musicians. The club is an open studio, a place

where you are allowed to make mistakes, where you can find and define your own style. In the cinema the audience is focused. Your work should be focused and precise, too.”

Do you prefer any context to show your work?







For anyone familiar with the scholarship on VJing and contemporary modes of moving image presentation—or anyone participating in its scenes worldwide—the definition of live cinema may be grasped almost intuitively. You could say that the practice encompasses forms of audio-visual performance that actively engage with traditional cinematographic conventions. Precisely which conventions depends on whom you ask. Mia Makela, a performer who has written a master’s thesis on the subject of “Live Cinema: Language and Elements” (2006), implies it has to do with specific contexts of presentation and regimes of attention. For her, live cinema may involve works similar to VJing being shown in a setting such as “a museum or theater.” The public, instead of being absently lost amid multiple projections, is often “sitting down and watching the performance attentively.”<sup>1</sup> [ Therefore, audience behavior leans toward the hyper-perceptive and sub-motor state that, according to Christian Metz, characterizes the classic cinematic situation.<sup>2</sup> [ ∫∫∫∫∫° Yet while some elements of the medium may be considered proper to its live variation, others are deemed antithetical—for instance, aspects of linear storytelling, particularly those “based on actors or verbal dialogues.”<sup>3</sup> [ This is where Makela draws a distinct line between

1 [

Mia Makela, "The Practice of Live Cinema," in: Media Space Journal 1 (2008), p. 1; available online at [miamakela.net/TEXT/text\\_PracticeOfLiveCinema.pdf](http://miamakela.net/TEXT/text_PracticeOfLiveCinema.pdf) (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

2 [

Christian Metz, "Story / Discourse: Notes on Two Kinds of Voyeurism," in: Bill Nichols (ed.), Movies and Methods Volume II, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, p. 548.

3 [

Makela, "The Practice of Live Cinema" (see note 1), p. 1.

one audiovisual form and another. According to her definition, live cinema is exempt from cinema's chief constraints, namely narrative continuity and a fixed spatial arrangement. Even setting up the projections is incorporated "as part of the creative process," intensifying the practice's kinship with the fields of expanded cinema and interactive installation.<sup>4</sup> [ Such extensive freedom of configuration favors works whose evocative structure is closer to poetry than to the prosaic linearity that distinguishes most movie genres, thus suggesting improvised, free-flowing abstractions. Considering how "the live context enforces the possibilities of participation of the audience,"<sup>5</sup> [ the main dialogue that should be happening in live cinema is the two-way, instantaneous feedback between the creator and the public. Δ But this is just one approach to the term. Some of the features that Makela rejects from the cinematographic medium are precisely the ones that other audiovisual performers might be claiming. One such aspect is the development of loose, linear narratives, as remarked by Amy Alexander.<sup>6</sup> [ The idea that live cinema can be characterized by storytelling is taken further by Toby Harris, aka \*spark, another artist who has entered academia in order to reflect upon his own practice. For several years, Harris has been working as a VJ, both solo and in collaboration with seminal collectives such as D-Fuse and The Light Surgeons. In the course of his doctoral investigation about "liveness," he

4 [  
Ibid., p. 6.

5 [  
Ibid., p. 5.

6 [  
Amy Alexander, "Audiovisual Live Performance," in:  
Dieter Daniels and Sandra Naumann (eds.), See This Sound:  
Audiovisuology Compendium, Linz: Ludwig Boltzmann  
Institute; Cologne: Walther König, 2010, pp. 199–204; online  
at [http://www.see-this-sound.at/compendium/maintext/  
54/1](http://www.see-this-sound.at/compendium/maintext/54/1) (accessed Sep 1, 2015).



7 [

Tobyz.net, “rbn\_esc >> urban escape,” <http://tobyz.net/tobyzstuff/projects/rbnesc> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

8 [

Tobyz.net, “Live Cinema Documentary,” <http://tobyz.net/tobyzstuff/projects/livecinemadoc> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

recital, in which “the performers need to play their audience, not their computers.”<sup>9</sup> [ In view of his call for a high level of “in-the-moment awareness, responsiveness and expression” from everyone involved, we could evoke Walter Benjamin’s characterization of storytelling as a regime of narration that involves deep exchanges of experience between the storyteller and the audience.<sup>10</sup> [ The light projected onto the screen is like a campfire around which the public gathers to absorb the performer’s tales. The performer is an actor whose main job would be to pursue communication through this process, keeping it meaningful for the audience. In that sense, computer technologies seem to allow cinema—a mechanically reproducible medium par excellence—to recuperate some of the “aura,” as if it belonged to a pre-modern era in which the inscription of sound and image was still not a given, and audiovisual narratives were impossible to separate from their enactment. Just like a story is interwoven in—and by—narration, so is live cinema intertwined with the operation of projection. ΩΩΩ Views such as Makela’s and Harris’ emphasize virtually opposed attributes of live cinema. How can a term that is meant to distinguish a type of audiovisual performance, and to make its definition clearer, be treated so ambiguously? To answer this question, we might start by considering the question how enlightening the word “cinema” can still be, when its meaning has become increasingly blurred. After all, the

## 9 [

Toby Harris, "About the Live in Live Cinema," 2012, p. 7, <http://tobyz.net/projects/2010-12-06-about-the-live-in-live-cinema/tobyharris-aboutliveinlivecinema-2012.pdf> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

## 10 [

Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Observations on the Work of Nikolai Leskov," in: Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings vol. 3: 1935–1938, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002, p. 146.



digital systems that made interactive media ubiquitous are the same that have triggered the obsolescence of photographic film, eroding what used to be considered cinema's most unequivocal mark of specificity. Both cinematographic practices and the field of film studies are being entirely reshaped. Is there anything a taxonomist of contemporary moving images can take from their lexicon—is there any meaning we must not ourselves supply? ● ● A closer reading of Makela might give some hints. On the one hand, she indeed asserts that cinema now includes “all forms of configuring moving images” (quoting from a Transmediale festival program).<sup>11</sup> [ Nevertheless, she insists that live cinema is “in essence artistic,” and therefore can be set apart from VJing. In the introduction of an issue of the *a mínima* magazine on the topic edited by her, Makela even remarks that “many Live Cinema creators feel the need to separate themselves from the VJ scene altogether, in order to establish their own artistic goals, which would rarely find an appreciative audience in a club environment.”<sup>12</sup> [ Ω Her position seems to suggest a sort of hierarchy of values in the realm of audiovisual performance. We imagine that VJs would be more like commercial directors for hire, paid by the hour, dealing with second-hand material, willing to follow popular trends. Meanwhile, live cinema creators would occupy a place equivalent to that of film auteurs, whose goals “appear to be more personal and artistic.”<sup>13</sup> [ The first thing

11 [

Makela, "The Practice of Live Cinema" (see note 1), p. 1.

12 [

Mia Makela, "Introduction: Live Cinema—Realtime audiovisual creation," a mínima 22 (2008), p. 7; online at [http://www.miamakela.net/TEXT/text\\_INTRO\\_AMINIMA\\_final.pdf](http://www.miamakela.net/TEXT/text_INTRO_AMINIMA_final.pdf) (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

13 [

Makela, "The Practice of Live Cinema" (see note 1), p. 2.

this position presupposes is a larger degree of creative control over the performance as a whole. Even more than making one's own source material, performing live cinema means not falling into contingent collaborations with any DJ, lighting engineer, or set producer that might be on that day's shift, as a VJ often has to do. In live cinema, the performer directs every aspect of the spectacle, never being relegated to a secondary role, while the activity of other professionals from other areas is aimed to create an experience for the audience. ≈ Aesthetic autonomy is not the only thing implied by auteurship, though. Think of all the directors that inspire cinephilic devotion: hasn't the public also become used to expect some sort of excellence from this breed of creators? Particular qualities that set them apart from the rest? In that sense, perhaps what audiovisual performance draws from cinema is not any kind of morphological trait, but rather the legitimacy it has accumulated over the years. The century-long history of this medium, central to the invention of the modern world and western subjectivity, certainly provides a worthy lineage for any improvisation with sound and image. Thus, live cinema is not simply a definition, but a proposition: a statement that certain works are not merely part of a technological fad—even when they might be—but exemplars of a late avant-garde. ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ To call a performance "live cinema" is more than invoking a background. It is to inscribe this

Which words do you use to describe yourself as an artist? | Other (49.1%)

Question 7

3D mapping artist	experimental media artist
intermedia artist	visual researcher
multimedia artist	mixed media artist
performance artist	scholar in the field of
sound and visual artist	audiovisual studies
transmission based artist	total artist
video operator	video artist
video performer	
visual music artist	

performance in a tradition, supposedly dissolving any suspicion that might exist about its cultural relevance. This is not done by the magical powers of the word alone. Even as a dignified shorthand for experimental practices, the label may have very pragmatic applications. Creating an exclusive segment in the wider territory of VJing, what the live cinema category loses in broadness it gains in coherence. The ensuing conceptual density favors negotiations for funding, space, media buzz, or any other resource within the established circuits. Strategically applied, this sort of branding is essential for articulating places where new practices could fit and platforms to sustain them as such.

# A case in point is the Mostra Live Cinema, a Brazilian event entirely dedicated to the category. Conceived by Luiz Duva, one of the national pioneers in audiovisual performance, it started in 2007 as a special program of the Rio de Janeiro International Film Festival, but has since grown autonomous. Every year, a number of works are selected or commissioned for presentation at the event, both local and from abroad. However, the significance of the role the Mostra plays in promoting live cinema in its home country seems mostly to lie in the sort of public relations it accomplishes for the practice as a whole. Since the beginning, it has reached toward traditional cinematographic elements, venues, formats, and even sponsors. The screenings that inaugurated the event were held in Rio's Odeon, a movie theater from 1926 that

hosts different film festivals. In two of its first editions, well-known directors were invited to perform live feature films. And it might also be worth mentioning that both the Mostra's 2009 itinerant program and its 2013 workshops were sponsored by Petrobrás, the semi-public energy company that is one of Brazilian cinema's main benefactors.<sup>14</sup> [ + In cultivating these associations, the Mostra actualizes the hypothetical interfaces between cinema and live performance come true, thus contributing to the crystallization of the practice. The event's regulations literally legislate over what live cinema should be, at least within its confines, as they set up rules for participating. For the 2013 edition, these only comprised a standard duration (30 minutes maximum) and a common space of presentation (the stage of the Oi Futuro auditorium, measuring 5m width, 7m depth, and 3.6m height). Any audiovisual performance that fit these criteria could be endorsed at the curators' discretion. As works of the most diverse calibers are made to comply with these or similar parameters, isn't it likely that they become sort of common denominators, feeding back into the genre? So, almost casually, an event like the Mostra Live Cinema might operate in the guise of a mechanism of specification, shaping the reality of live cinema. Through it, the definition of the practice is being continuously refined. ● As it upholds a particular cultural meaning and relevance, the concept of live cinema can be useful

14 [

Mostra Live Cinema website, “Histórico,” <http://livecinema.com.br/en/historico/> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

“I’m always concerned with the relationship between the art and the audience, how to get closer to the public?”

Do you have any further statements on audiovisual art you want to share with us?



not only for audiovisual performance, but also for cinema itself. For instance, let's consider how the term has recently entered the vocabulary of the medium via another route: as a reference to the realtime streaming of sport events and theatrical spectacles—such as operas, concerts, and plays—to movie theaters worldwide. This service is already provided by traditional British companies like the Royal Opera House and National Theatre, giving the audience a cheaper and more accessible alternative to their tickets. For cinemas, one of the reasons to adopt this exclusive content is to have another trait to distinguish them from the increasingly competitive channels of digital distribution, peer-to-peer networks, and video-on-demand. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that the liveness at issue is equivalent to that of a TV broadcast or web streaming, in which the presence of the spectacle is extended beyond its original location and often hypermediated by the means of multiple framings and camera angles. What a term such as live cinema does, is to solve this paradoxical state, as it indicates that the medium has absorbed some novelties of computer networks without caving in to them. Thus, instead of challenging cinema's specificities, its distinction from other media actually becomes enforced, allowing it to keep a certain prominence. It is not hard to imagine audiovisual performances being deployed in the film market in a similar way.  $\Delta\Delta\Delta^\circ$  And just as it can affect the economy of the medium,

the idea of live cinema may create opportunities to renew our understanding of it, highlighting the diverse vitalities that permeate cinema. As Makela reminds us, performances were already happening in the silent film era, in the form of oral narration or musical accompaniments that supplemented every screening—tasks that have recently been recreated as a trend.<sup>15</sup> [ In any case, one does not have to look for such liveness in the past history of the medium. Even today, all we have to do is to turn away from the stage, to the auditorium in front of it: it is full of activity. Classical apparatus theory once affirmed that the image “is brought into being by nothing other than the look”<sup>16</sup> [ — in other words, that the movie exists primarily through the public’s cognitive labor. If we consider that a work depends on the interplay between the artist and the audience, as is often said, then this practice of audiencing should be at least half of the process, right? Nevertheless, little attention is paid to it, even in the specialized literature.<sup>17</sup> [ √√√√√√√√™™√√√° A thorough interpretation of live cinema would mean taking these and other elements that collaborate in the continuing production of moving images more seriously into account. It would mean tackling the medium’s underpinnings and its back stages, revisiting territories once explored by expanded cinema pioneers such as Guy Sherwin, for whom live cinema was the performance of projection,<sup>18</sup> [ or structural films like *Projection Instructions* (Morgan Fisher, 1976).

15 [

Makela, "The Practice of Live Cinema" (see note 1), p. 2.

16 [

Metz, "Story/Discourse" (see note 2), p. 546.

17 [

Harris, "About the Live in Live Cinema" (see note 9), p. 5.

18 [

Duncan White, "Live Cinema (interview Guy Sherwin by Lynn Loo and Duncan White)," in: Duncan White et al. (eds.), Expanded Cinema: Art, Performance, Film, London: Tate Publishing, 2011, p. 252.

This short 16mm piece deserves a special mention for the way it engages the projectionist both as public and performer. It consists of a series of title screens accompanied by a monotonous narrator, commanding the operator to perform an action on the apparatus: “volume up,” “turn tone to treble,” “throw out of focus,” etc. The proper enactment of the work depends on these instructions to be strictly followed and executed during projection. Whether this happens or not, we become conscious of the presence of the projectionist and the many possibilities of intervention he or she always has at hand.

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Allowing such interferences to be framed not as exceptions, but as premises, live cinema’s most compelling effect is heuristic. As we understand that images are never finished, but rather continuously result from the network of activities that surround and sustain them, the “screen essentialism” that plagues visual media begins to recede. In fact, when we look back at screens, we ought to see them in the way that Sherwin does: as materials in action, exercising their affordances, standing still, absorbing and reflecting light in particular ways.<sup>19</sup> [ Hence, every single screening comes out as performance—the joint effort of running machines, of the workers that operate them, of the audience’s gaze and affective investment. The mere act of pressing play always involves a degree of risk.

19 [  
ibid., p. 253.

In face of that, it seems to matter less if a work is done in realtime than whether it is committed to embracing or concealing the fact that all cinema is live.



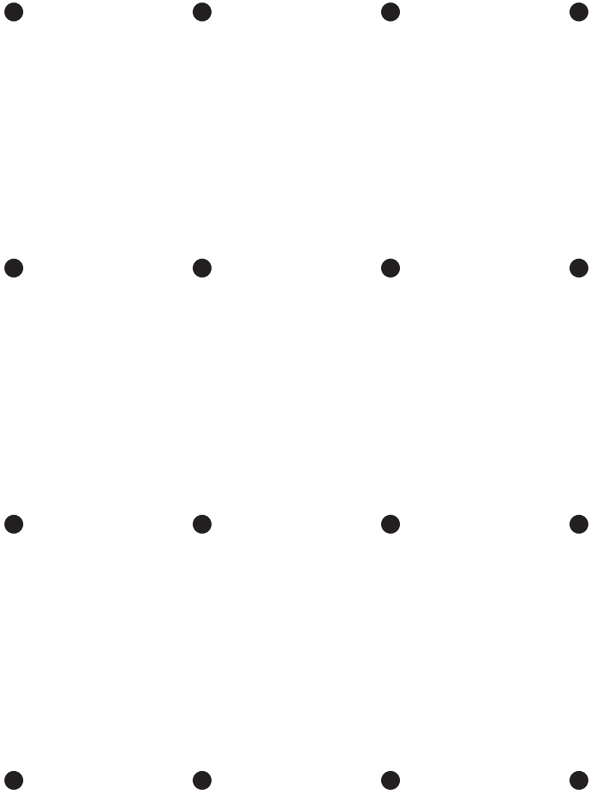
Which terms apply best to your work? | Other (19.2%)

Question 6

- cinematic assemblage
- immersive and interactive design
- biomedia performance
- mixed media
- multimedia performance
- live living performance
- realtime live video show







**VJ** ● The term VJ has evolved as an acronym for “video jockey,” describing “video performance artists who create live visuals, in parallel with a disk jockey.”<sup>1</sup> [ VJing as artistic practice stands for video mixing, visual jamming, or visual live coding,<sup>2</sup> [ and defines itself via the act of selecting and intuitive jamming live<sup>3</sup> [ as well as the processing of visual contents and realtime<sup>4</sup> [ settings.

● This corresponds to the collective definition of VJing, developed by 375 Wikipedians within the framework of a Wiki Sprint Project at the 2010 Mapping Festival in Geneva: Δ Δ Δ Δ VJing is the

manipulation or selection of visuals, the same way DJing is a selection and manipulation of audio. One of the key elements in the practice of VJing is the realtime mix of content from a “library of media.” In addition to the selection of media, VJing mostly implies realtime processing of the visual material. The term is also used to describe the performative use of generative software.<sup>5</sup> [ ●

### **Aesthetics, Content, Technology, and Formal**

**Parameters** ● Aesthetically, VJing is influenced by the fine arts on the one hand—experimental film, television, performance art, and video and media art—and by music, the performing arts, and sound art on the other. ○ Blending various image formats, such as real video loops, generated visual material, found footage from movies or photography, and their structural fragmentation, and creating collages and mixes, VJing has deve-

1 [

See 375 Wikipedians, VJing, Greyscale Press, 2010, back cover.

2 [

A note on live coding: this includes, for instance, performances with generative softwares such as vvvv, Jitter, or Processing. Live coding is defined as algorithm-based visual work with code and programming language in realtime.

3 [

“Live” as in “live performance” stands for the performative act of an artist at a certain place, within a certain timeframe, for a certain public. The German theater scientist Erika Fischer-Lichte defines “liveness” as “the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators” (“die leibliche Ko-Präsenz von Akteuren und Zuschauern”); in: Erika Fischer-Lichte, The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics, New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 38 (German original: Ästhetik des Performativen, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2004, p. 114). In an additional meaning, some VJs are using “live” broadcasting technologies, such as live cameras, in order to mix the filmed footage with prerecorded visual footage.

4 [

“Realtime” means “the actual time during which a process or event occurs,” see <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/real-time> (accessed Sept 1, 2015). “Realtime” in computer technology describes system response: realtime programs must guarantee response within strict time constraints. In VJing, generative programs such as vvvv, MAX/MSP or Quartz Composer are used for visualizations based on digital coding. The visuals respond to musical parameters in realtime. In contrast to the

loped into a visual format which defies traditional forms of visual narration. 6 [ ● Fragments are edited in software, mixed and recombined with the aim of generating new meanings, different from the original ones. 7 [ ● The development of VJing is inseparably linked with its counterpart, DJing, and is itself based on musical parameters such as jamming. 8 [ Constants of electronic music such as scratching 9 [ and remixing 10 [ are also formal strategies of VJing.

● Besides the term “visual jockey,” the VJ is also called a “visual jammer” in some countries. That designation creates a link with music and it might be even more appropriate, since just like in jam sessions, improvisation is the basis of VJing performances. 11 [ ● The performative character of a VJ performance is closely connected to the structural and formal influences of the music: composition, rhythm, the desire to create immersive 12 [ spaces, and the use of samples, 13 [ loops, 14 [ or patterns, 15 [ all of which can be compared to the development of electronic music and DJing. Much as in electronic music performances, which go well beyond the act of pressing the play button, it is not sufficient for something to be defined as a “VJ performance” to produce a video clip which is played back and projected. This kind of event would rather be called a music video screening or some similar term. /° VJing—as any other performative format—stands for liveness, transience, and uniqueness. But even more than, for example, a live cinema performance, which usually is based on a dramaturgical audio-visual concept, VJing is pure improvisation.

meaning of “live,” neither artist nor public are needed for a realtime process, which can be automatically executed by the computer.

5 [

375 Wikipedians, VJing (see note 1), pp. 17f.

6 [

For narration theory cf. Ansgar and Vera Nünning (eds.), Erzähltheorie transgenerisch, intermedial, interdisziplinär, Trier: WVT, 2002; Franz K. Stanzel: Theorie des Erzählens, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979; Monika Fludernik, Towards a “Natural” Narratology, London: Taylor & Francis, 1996.

7 [

Daniela Tordino, “Musical Language in the VJing Art,” VJ Theory.net, 2007, [vjtheory.net/web\\_texts/friend\\_text\\_tordino.htm](http://vjtheory.net/web_texts/friend_text_tordino.htm) (accessed Aug 3; 2014; retrievable at [http://web.archive.org/web/20090913070053/http://www.vjtheory.net/web\\_texts/text\\_tordino.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20090913070053/http://www.vjtheory.net/web_texts/text_tordino.htm)). See also: N\_DREW (aka Andrew Bucksbarg), “VJing and Live A/V Practices,” VJ Theory.net, 2009, [vjtheory.net/web\\_texts/friend\\_text\\_bucksbarg.htm](http://vjtheory.net/web_texts/friend_text_bucksbarg.htm) (accessed Aug 3, 2014; retrievable at [http://web.archive.org/web/20120414003114/http://www.vjtheory.net/web\\_texts/text\\_bucksbarg.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20120414003114/http://www.vjtheory.net/web_texts/text_bucksbarg.htm)) and VJam Theory: Collective Writings on Realtime Visual Performance, Falmouth: Realtime Books, 2008, p. 33.

8 [

A jam session is defined as “a gathering or performance in which musicians play together informally without any preparation: a session in which musicians jam with each other; an often impromptu performance by a group especially of jazz musicians that is characterized by improvisation.” Merriam Webster, online dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jam%20session> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

9 [

DJs use the term *scratching* for the production of special sounds by quickly and rhythmically moving a record playing on a turntable back and forth.

10 [

A musical piece which uses parts of an already existing track, alienating them, mixing the components differently, and integrating them into the new piece.

11 [

Daniela Tordino, “Musical Language in the VJing Art” (see note 7).

12 [

The term *immersive*, when applied to “a computer display or system,” means “generating a three-dimensional image that appears to surround the user.” See [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/de/definition/englisch\\_usa/immersive](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/de/definition/englisch_usa/immersive) (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

13 [

*Sampling*, in music, is the extraction of long or short parts or individual sounds from already existing pieces, which are then integrated into a new piece or a new performance.

14 [

Sound tracks or video clips repeating themselves in an endless loop.

15 [

Repeating structures or patterns in music or in visualization.

16 [

N\_DREW, “VJing and Live A/V Practices” (see note 7).

17 [

375 Wikipedians, [VJing](#) (see note 1), p. 11.

Participation, reciprocity, and interaction are some of its characteristics, as well as enduring and appearing in the very moment. The VJ performance—other than realtime processes—does not exist without the performing and improvising VJ. ++

VJ performances are embodied, in other words, they include interfaces and controllers that require the movement and gesture of the performer or participant for control, as well as the use of expressive movements of the body in space that are translated into audio-

visual material. 16 [ ⇄ ⇄ ⇄ **The viewer response plays an important role. Interaction with the audience, albeit on a subconscious level, has a big influence on the result of the performance, which never occurs in the same manner twice. Since there is a great deal of improvisation, each performance is different. Much like music, theater, or opera, visuals can be perceived and processed in a temporal sequence only. Because of its performative and improvised character, the factors time and space are the foundation of VJing. ● ° ° Collaboration and Response /+**

At the root of [the definition of VJing] lies its [interdisciplinary] combination with artistic expression through audio; examples of realtime visual manipulations to silence are rare exceptions. This means that VJ work is of a collaborative nature,

especially with musicians, sound artists and DJs. 17 [ † **In its essence, VJing always visualizes something else—music in most cases and, frequently, the live, spontaneous, and improvisational music mix of a DJ.**

As discussed above, VJing cannot be examined separately from the music, as it has developed in deep entwinement with DJing. Never-

theless, a crucial difference to the other audio-visual formats discussed in this publication (such as visual music and live audiovisual performance) needs to be observed: in terms of the musical level, there is a shift in priorities between these genres. VJing as an action addresses the visual side which, however, always occurs in combination with another level. Without implying that the visual part is secondary or less worthy, a VJ always visualizes something else. ↘ VJing as a visual component, therefore, always refers to a responsive action, a cooperation with someone else, a DJ, a live audio act, or a band, and so forth. Only in rare cases do VJs perform the visual level alone, which would require a special qualifier in the description—such as, for instance, “mute VJ performance” or the like. The distinction from live cinema or live audiovisual performance is that, unlike VJing, these genres are already fundamentally defined via their inherent relationship with a musical level, i.e., they already include the musical component in their own definition and their audiovisual dramaturgy, which VJing does only via external collaboration with another genre or performance. Having developed from a desire to produce and stage sound and image in actual interplay and in a constant and conceptually integrated coexistence, many VJs and visualists have united with musicians in order to work on a joint live audiovisual performance. Audiovisual live performers simultaneously create sounds and



visuals as a collective or as solo artists. A joint choreography, joint conceptual and substantive considerations, or those pertaining to both media, are inherently integrated into the performance. | Visual Wallpaper {° In recent years, many artists seem to have gradually turned away from pure VJing. One reason for this development within the VJ scene is discussed in the article “Visual Wallpaper” 18 [ by David Bernard, which describes the competitive behavior that occurs, time and again, particularly in the club scene. The article sees the origin of this behavior in the dissatisfaction of many VJs, who report being treated and perceived increasingly unfavorably by hosts and audiences compared to the musicians. **David Bernard describes the situation:** ●

The anti-wallpaper camp often unites in the “steal of the focus” crusade: in their quest to get their work appreciated as it should [...], they often aim to compete for the top spot usually reserved for the DJ or main music act. Unfortunately, this can often translate as a race to capture the audience’s undivided visual attention with the screen(s) becoming the dominating focus of the space rather than a complement to the other visual stimuli such as lighting, decor as well as the stage performers and the audience themselves. Content [...] becomes everything and having a cinema-style environment to the club where the whole audience is glued zombie-like to the screen(s) is seen as a satisfactory outcome. 19 [ Δ

**Bernard is correct in stating that visuals should be inserted into the experience as a whole in clubs and concerts, instead of overshadowing the music. However, a critical examination of the situation is complicated by the fact that**

18 [

David Bernard, "Visual Wallpaper," VJ Theory.net, 2006, [vjtheory.net/web\\_texts/friend\\_text\\_bernard.htm](http://vjtheory.net/web_texts/friend_text_bernard.htm) (accessed Aug 3, 2014; retrievable at [http://web.archive.org/web/20120526005723/http://www.vjtheory.net/web\\_texts/text\\_bernard.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20120526005723/http://www.vjtheory.net/web_texts/text_bernard.htm)).

19 [

ibid.

VJs have long been fighting for a fairer treatment and for recognition as equal artists. Especially in reference to the “performance” and its “liveness,” it is acutely important to grant VJs their space on stage in order to make their performative approach visible to the audience in the first place. The audience cannot easily recognize the difference between a DVD that is played back and a live or realtime performance on the projection surface, unless the VJ is on stage and discernible as a performer. Stage visibility has a considerable influence on the general situation and organically integrates the performer of the visuals into the overall picture. ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞ ∞ Nevertheless, the VJ must not forget that on the one hand he or she still responds to something else—the music or the space—and on the other hand the club audience is volatile by nature. One must attempt to create an atmosphere rather than telling complex stories, especially in a club situation. If one wants a focused audience glued to the screen, one should choose venues like a movie theater or an opera house. The club context requires something else; it wants to remain the “other space,”<sup>20</sup> [ a space where it is not necessary for visitors to focus, where they can just let go. Club atmosphere is characterized by the very fickleness of perception, the looseness of being adrift, the charged atmosphere, and a strong communicative element. ✨ ✨ Presently it becomes clear why so many artists increasingly have turned away from the

20 [

See Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," in: Neil Leach (ed.), Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory, New York: Routledge, 1997, pp. 330–336.

“NOW is the source. Slanggs and expressions from the people. I like to hear the audience first, to know them.”

What is an important source of inspiration for your work?

concept of VJing and have conquered other spaces instead: because they want greater attention for their art. Since the term VJ clearly refers to the club context in almost all cases, artists would amend their job description by a second or third job title comprising other activities. One frequently hears: “I am a VJ and media artist,” “I am a VJ and designer,” or “I am a visual artist and VJ.” ✨

This development away from pure VJing toward interdisciplinary work becomes apparent in our international survey. Another survey conducted in Austria additionally points to the fact that here the term “visualist” was introduced as far back as the late 1990s in order to extricate the performer from the connotations of the term VJing and thus to willfully include a broader range of art approaches. ° Art versus Party ° International experts are of two minds when it comes to the question: “Can VJing be defined as an artistic practice?” Answers vary, depending on whether they come from an inside or an outside point of view. However, opinions also differ in internal discussions. Here, it is more difficult to tie the issue of “art or no art” to a specific context—the club or the established cultural institution. Dada and Fluxus already demanded a fusion of life and art, and have made this fusion socially acceptable. Why, then, from a contemporary point of view, should not art take place in a club as well? ✨ In the international and Austrian surveys, approximately 80 percent of participants answered the question

of whether they saw themselves as artists in the affirmative. Less than four percent said no, and about 20 percent stated it would depend on the context. Some respondents saw themselves as part-time artists. Their self-perception primarily had to do with the market: VJs are rarely able to make a living from their assignments at clubs, festivals, and art institutions. Therefore, the commercial sector is a significant part of the working reality. It is important not to regard the leap between the two contexts as negative. Many VJs do not come from the artistic-academic, established field of high culture, but from a more technical training for example in the multimedia branches of applied sciences or design. Accordingly, they do not have the official status of a trained artist. Parallel to this, some of them express the view that they want to throw parties, not make art. The art discussion can become problematic due to the heterogeneity of the scene. In this area in particular, where the parameters of strong and established institutions such as the art market, museums, and theaters cannot be translated one-to-one, it is difficult to draw objective lines. The mere act of calling oneself an artist does not yet render one's own work art. So, even if nearly 80 percent of participants classify their work as art, there is by far no consensus about the actual definition of the term. Δ Δ Despite this unsettled state it is certain that VJing has developed an artistic community, which has been searching for new concepts and has estab-

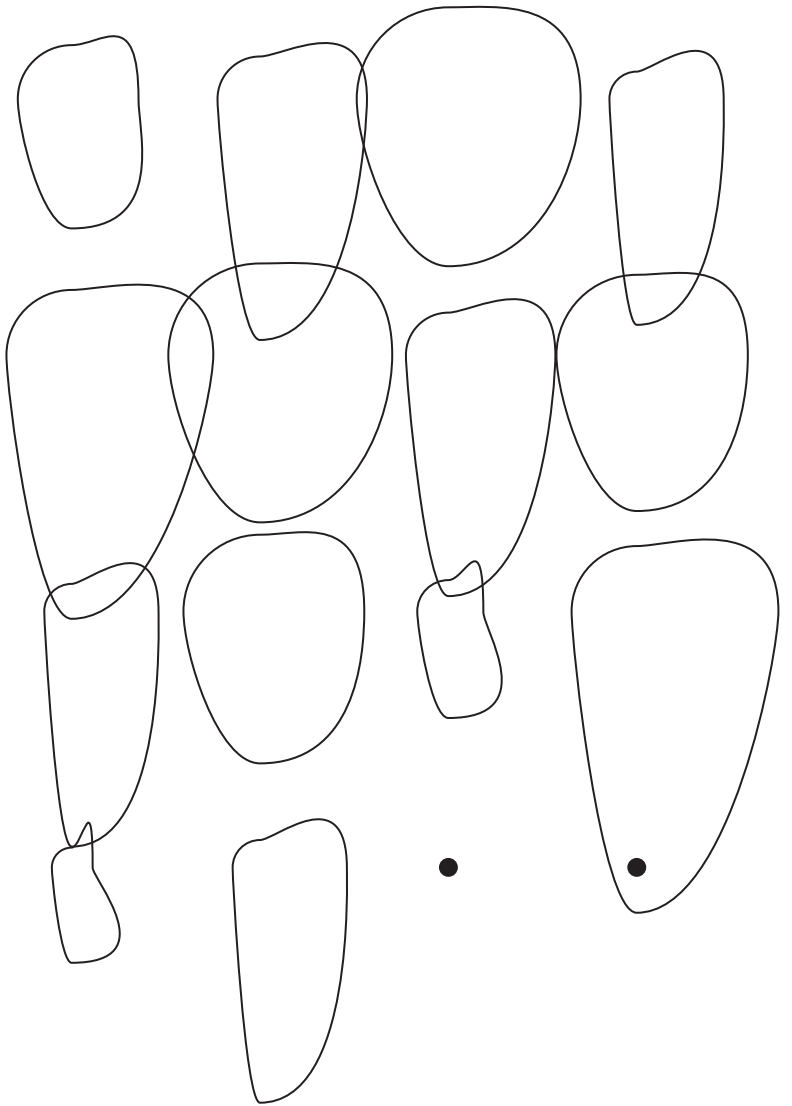
lished new demands. The artistic processes remain rooted in the original creative idea to select, to make collages, to remix or sample, and to make something else visible—live and in realtime. This has developed into a unique form of art and creativity, which, in turn, has greatly influenced other genres.

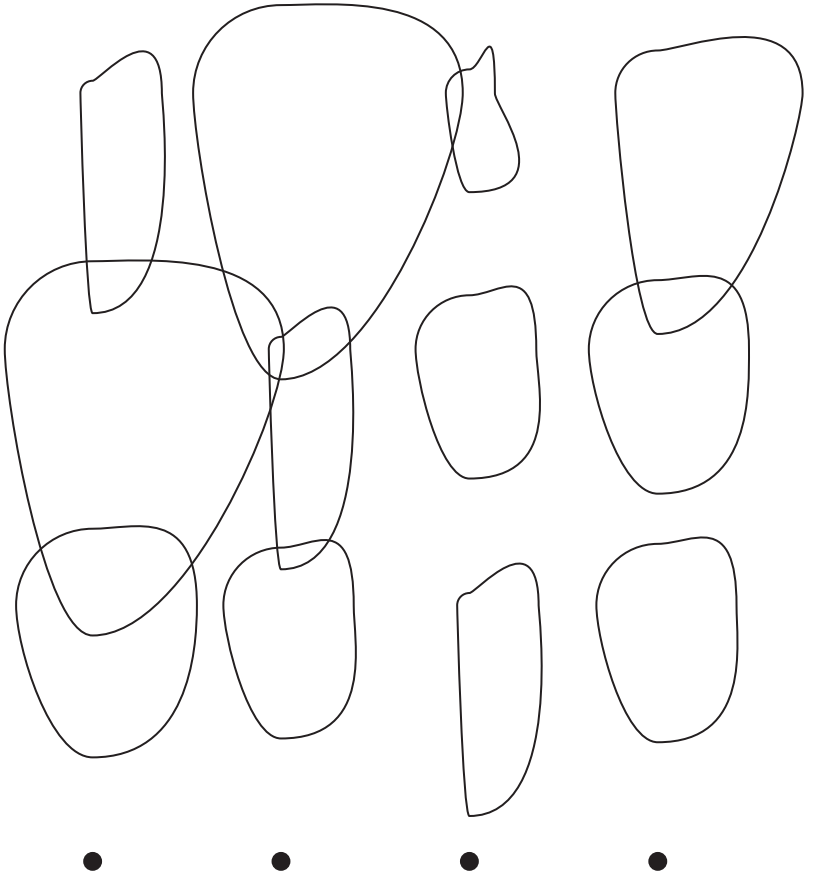




Do you prefer any context  
or location to show your work?  
| Other (52.8%)

- art spaces
- chapels and churches
- Internet
- outdoors
- public spaces
- domes
- industrial sites
- out-of-context spaces
- festivals
- music concert screenings
- non-commercial events
- site-specific





Live audiovisual performance is a term applied to contemporary artistic expressions of live manipulated sound and image, defined as time-based, media-based, and performative. Live audiovisual performance is complex because it does not comprise a specific style, technique, or medium, but instead gathers a series of common elements that simultaneously identify a group of artistic expressions as well as specific works, which don't necessarily fit within either of the particular expressions that constitute the group. Ω Ω Δ Ω Ω We will start by segmenting the definition to describe the elements constituting the term live audiovisual performance. To start with, "audiovisual" denotes audio and image, the two general outcomes of the action and their combination as a resulting expression. Amy Alexander traces a common starting point for audiovisual performative practices in the color organ, stating: "What is common to most color organs throughout history is that they correlate the performance of light to the performance of sound—whether metaphorically or literally."<sup>1</sup> [ Since the beginning of these practices, there has thus always been an interconnection between sound and image, which sometimes becomes apparent and at other times remains intuitive. "Performance" takes its cue from Allan Kaprow's concept of event-based artistic practices, such as perfor-

1 [

Amy Alexander, "Audiovisual Live Performance," in: Dieter Daniels and Sandra Naumann (eds.), See This Sound: Audiovisuology Compendium, Linz: Ludwig Boltzmann Institute; Cologne: Walther König, 2010, p. 199; online at <http://www.see-this-sound.at/compendium/maintext/54/1> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

mances, happenings, and situations. 2 [ In his writings and his practice, we can find the grounds for all the complex dynamics between the presence of the artists and its meaning for the final result presented to the audience, the dynamics of presence. “Live” addresses the relationship between performance (presence) and the technology necessary to create, manipulate, and project sound and image. Here we take the historical E.A.T. 3 [ events as a major reference point that combined performance with technology. Since sound and image are always mediated, technology occupies a central position, it shapes the results. A feature of live audiovisual performance is improvisation, implicit in “live” and “performance.” Improvisation becomes possible when the technology used allows for production in realtime. As William Kaizen explains: “Paradoxically, it was the intervention of video as a means of recording that produced ‘the live’ in live television as liveness became an ideological as much as a technological limit condition.” 4 [ The televisual immediacy grew into liveness. The cameras, mixers, and software for image and sound manipulation have been derived from television equipment and now permit to capture and present simultaneously while an action is happening. Realtime is a technological capacity that allies presence with manipulation of sound [ or image source material. ● ● ● The term live audiovisual performance is often used as a generic umbrella that extends to all manner of

2 [

Allan Kaprow, Assemblages, Environments and Happenings, New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1956; see excerpt at [http://web.mit.edu/jscheib/Public/performancemedia/kaprow\\_assemblages.pdf](http://web.mit.edu/jscheib/Public/performancemedia/kaprow_assemblages.pdf) (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

3 [

E.A.T. (Experiments in Art and Technology) was an organized group of artists and engineers who came together to develop artistic projects at the convergence of the arts and sciences. The results of ten months of work were presented at a series of events titled 9 Evenings: Theatre and Engineering, which took place between 13 and 23 October 1966.

4 [

William Kaizen, "Live on Tape: Video, Liveness and the Immediate," in: Tanya Leighton (ed.), Art and the Moving Image, London: Tate Publishing/Afterall, 2008, p. 264.

audiovisual performative expressions, mainly to VJing, live cinema, expanded cinema, and visual music. From this perspective, live audiovisual performance identifies the common issues of these practices. Most artists identify themselves within this definition,<sup>5</sup> [ even if they mention other more specific ones as well. Cornelia and Holger Lund define visual music through the complexity of cross-referencing and of contradiction within the genre as “audiovisual productions pursuing the basic objective of evenly balanced or equilibrated interplay between visual and acoustic components.”<sup>6</sup> [ Amy Alexander differentiates between VJing and live cinema, but does not address live audiovisual performance (or “audiovisual live performance,” in her term) as a practice with its own particular features. ‡ Events for live visual performances, especially on festivals, take place all over the world. They provide a moment for understanding the practice in its most innovative expressions. Since the community—defined by those individuals interested in and involved with the creation, production, and fruition of the genre—is located globally, its online presence, especially through dedicated websites, becomes central to its representation. When we take the websites of two European festivals, Mapping Festival and sound:frame as examples, what can their programs tell us about their self-definition? The Mapping Festival is identified as an event “dedicated to audiovisual art and digital culture.”<sup>7</sup> [ The artworks



5 [

See the survey in this publication, p. 71.

6 [

Cornelia Lund and Holger Lund, "Editorial," in: C. and H. Lund (eds.), Audio.Visual: On Visual Music and Related Media, Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2009, p. 12.

7 [

Mapping Festival 2014 website, "About," <http://www.mappingfestival.com/2014/en/about> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

presented in the program of the 2014 edition were divided into installations, performances, clubbing, and movies. The festival had a VJ contest and related activities including workshops, lectures, as well as a section of special events. On the other hand, sound:frame “deals with audiovisual forms of expression within the contexts of exhibitions and performances.” 8 [ The 2014 program was broadly divided into an exhibition, a series of presentations, a conference, and live AV performances, taking place at art-related spaces, such as museums, and in clubs. Both festivals address the audiovisual in two directions: object-oriented, that is, exhibiting installations and videos, and event-oriented, that is, presenting performances. “Audiovisual” seems, therefore, to be used, in both events, as the generic term. ①②③ From the generic to the particular—what could be seen as the contribution of a single practice to live audiovisual performance as a generic term? For example, the project VJTheory 9 [ has described VJing as “the action of mixing visuals in a live/performance environment such as a club,” 10 [ but not exclusively. VJing is understood beyond the club and the party context. By expressing that the “project intends to develop a community actively discussing and reflecting on philosophy and theory related with VJing and real-time interaction,” 11 [ references to all sorts of live manipulation and interactivity are also emphasized, extending the scope of the project’s intentions to installations as well. Elsewhere, Mark Amerika’s

8 [

sound:frame festival 2014 website, "About sound:frame," <http://2014.soundframe.at/en/festival-2014/about-soundframe> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

9 [

For the project VJTheory see [www.vjtheory.net](http://www.vjtheory.net) (site temporarily suspended in 2015; retrievable through the Wayback Machine on [archive.org](http://archive.org)).

10 [

"What Is VJing and Realtime Interaction," [VJ Theory.net](http://www.vjtheory.net), [http://www.vjtheory.net/what\\_is.htm](http://www.vjtheory.net/what_is.htm) (accessed Aug 3, 2014; retrievable at [http://web.archive.org/web/20150223180310/http://vjtheory.net/what\\_is.htm](http://web.archive.org/web/20150223180310/http://vjtheory.net/what_is.htm)).

11 [

"About," [VJ Theory.net](http://www.vjtheory.net), <http://www.vjtheory.net> (accessed Aug 3, 2014; retrievable at <http://web.archive.org/web/20150223212048/http://vjtheory.net/index.htm>).

definition of the VJ describes, beyond the practice of live manipulation, a philosophy of improvisation, extending from live audiovisuals to artists and writers engaged with technology. The performance of the VJ is experienced as a method of inquiry through life as improvisation, a “lifestyle practice.”<sup>12</sup> [ *~~~~~* So far we have presented live audiovisual performance as a generic term, applied to a group of artistic practices which, each on their own, have features that can describe and contribute to the generic term itself. Having said that, the term also acknowledges works with specific features that fit within neither the cinematic context of live cinema nor the club context of VJing, that can neither be defined as expanded cinema nor through a connection to visual music. Live audiovisual performance identifies the specificity of a work by highlighting its intermediality. These are “works which fall conceptually between media,”<sup>13</sup> [ as described by Dick Higgins. While live audiovisual performance, as a combination between sound, image, and performance, by itself doesn’t need this association with intermediality, still each performance potentiates unlimited possibilities through the combination of these same elements (sound, image, performance) with other media, such as drawing or text. *ÍÍÍ* The endless creative and expressive potential that lies in the combination between artistic areas—dance, generative art, video, theater, and others—is easy to recognize when intermedia connections in the work

12 [

Mark Amerika, META/DATA: A Digital Poetics, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007, p. 80.

13 [

Dick Higgins and Hannah Higgins, "Intermedia," in: Leonardo, vol. 34, no. 1 (Feb 2001), p. 52; online at <https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/leonardo/v034/34.1higgins.html> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

of specific artists and collaborative teams become pronounced. Presenting a position that demonstrates the difference between two of the practices, Mia Makela explains: “Many Live Cinema artists work in close collaboration with musicians and form AV-groups (Rechenzentrum, Telcosystems, Pink Twins, etc.), symbolizing that their approach has gone far beyond creating visual wallpapers to accompany the DJ.”<sup>14</sup> [ These collaborative dynamics are even more obvious in live audiovisual performances where audio and visual artists work together with other professionals to create unique unclassifiable events—through the construction or appropriation of tools, as for example the use of Google Earth by Satellite Jockey,<sup>15</sup> [ or through the combination with dance and opera, as for example in some events by Hotel Pro Forma.<sup>16</sup> [

ǻ ǻ ǻ ǻ ǻ ǻ Holding in mind, as suggested by Tanya Leighton, that technology-based contemporary artistic expressions are radically heterogeneous,<sup>17</sup> [ the formulation of closed definitions and clear segmentations presents itself as impossible. To address the circumstances that define our contemporaneity, it would be more appropriate to construct flexible structures connecting the different works rather than using a rigid series of definitions. Seen like this, a theoretical framework specific to live audiovisual performance would be in permanently changing formulation (without fixity), relating the specificities of a single practice to what is common to the group of practices involved,

14 [

Mia Makela, "Introduction: Live Cinema—Realtime audiovisual creation," a mínima 22 (2008); online at [http://www.miamakela.net/TEXT/text\\_INTRO\\_AMINIMA\\_final.pdf](http://www.miamakela.net/TEXT/text_INTRO_AMINIMA_final.pdf) (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

15 [

For the Satellite Jockey project see: <http://ricksilva.net/satellitejockey.html> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

16 [

See e.g. Parsifal at Hotel Pro Forma: <http://www.hotelproforma.dk/projects/parsifal> (accessed Sep 1, 2015).

17 [

Tanya Leighton, "Introduction," in: T. Leighton (ed.), Art and the Moving Image, London: Tate Publishing/Afterall, 2008, p. 12.

always pointing ahead to the next turn that will be provoked technologically, politically, aesthetically, or by affections between the elements of the community.





“Public space is where  
projection is at its best,  
allowing us to interact with  
the environment and to  
reach people from all walks  
of life in their everyday  
surroundings.”

Do you prefer any context to show  
your work?

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“It’s difficult to give this genre a certain name with a perfect match, as it will always be a very quick-changing thing due to the upcoming inventions of tech-gear. As an artist

I'd like to see more cross-media usage and collaborations and exchanges between different media experts with inspiring methods that are so simple that I'm finally forced to

say: why didn't I come up  
with this idea first?"

Do you have any further statements on  
audiovisual art you want to share with us?

✿ Ana Carvalho ✿ is a live video composer and performer, who writes on subjects related to live audiovisual performance. She holds a PhD on “Communication and Digital Platforms” from Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto (FLUP). Her thesis was titled “Materiality and the Ephemeral: Identity and Performative Audiovisual Arts, Its Documentation and Memory Construction.” In 2005, together with Brendan Byrne, she initiated VJTheory, an editorial project available online as an archive. Ana Carvalho has organized several events from a point of convergence of theory and practice in the UK and in Portugal. Currently she holds a position as invited lecturer at the Instituto Universitário da Maia (ISMAI). ✿ Eva Fischer ✿ is an Austrian art historian, curator, and visualist based in Vienna. She is the founder and director of the sound:frame Festival for Audiovisual Expressions in Vienna, which she started in 2007. Since then, sound:frame has become one of the most important international festivals in that field. Fischer wrote her magister thesis on “Audiovisual Tendencies” and has widely published and lectured on interdisciplinary artistic approaches and cultural (→

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✱ Adeena Mey ✱ is a critic, curator, and currently a PhD candidate at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. He studied Aural and Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths College in London and Science Studies (→

and Critical Theory at the University of Lausanne. From 2013 to 2015 he was a visiting researcher at Central Saint-Martins, London. During this time, he also ran the independent project space PastVyneStreet, nested in a railway arch in East London, with co-curator Sandra Sykороva. With François Bovier, he is the editor of the books René Berger: L'art vidéo (JRP-Ringier, 2014); Cinéma Exposé/Exhibited Cinema (ECAL/Les presses du réel, 2015); Exhibiting the Moving Image: History Revisited and Cinema in the Expanded Field (both forthcoming in late 2015 from JRP-Ringier).

He is currently a critic in residence at Cheongju Art Studio in South Korea, where he is curating the exhibition Kunsthalle Archeology. Mey's writings address the intersection of experimental and artists' films, exhibition history, and critical theory. ✱

✱ Eva-Maria Offermann ✱ is a German designer whose work is based on concepts shifting between art and design. She has mainly concentrated on print design and shown her posters in design exhibitions around the world, garnering prizes from the Tokyo Type Director's Club, the International Poster and Graphic Design Festival Chaumont, the Taipei International Design Award, among several others. Offermann studied fine arts and design at Akademie der Bildenden Künste Stuttgart, receiving her degree (→

in communication design in 2012. Since then she has been running her own studio, while also taking up work as a visual communications assistant at Kunsthochschule Kassel the following year. ✿—  
✿— Maria Pfeifer ✿— is an Austrian cultural manager and scholar of comparative literature, based in Vienna and Linz. She is part of the core team running the sound:frame Festival for Audiovisual Expressions and wrote her master thesis on the visualization of literature. Since 2011 she has also been involved in various projects of the Linz-based Festival Ars Electronica and the Ars Electronica Futurelab. Currently she is holding a lectureship on event management and exhibition practices in the field of literature at the Paris Lodron University of Salzburg. ✿—

“Whatever term it’s given,  
AV art is still in its infancy,  
not often understood by  
the wider media.”

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audiovisual art you want to share with us?

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