

Tez / Optofonica

an interview by Olga Mink for plazaplus 2010

<http://plazaplusfestival.wordpress.com/2010/01/08/interview-tez-optofonica/>

Maurizio Martinucci (aka TeZ) is an Italian multimedia artist and producer, living and working in Amsterdam, who has collaborated with, Scanner, Kim Cascone, Taylor Deupree and Domenico Sciajno. He uses technology as a means to explore synesthesia and the relationship between sound, light and space. He focuses primarily on generative compositions with spatialized sound for live performances and immersive environments. TeZ is also the brainfather of the "Optofonica" platform for Synesthetic Media and Sound Spatialization.



Interview TeZ:

Can you shortly introduce yourself?

I must admit that this is often the question I find more difficult to answer given the multifaceted nature of my work. The best definition I can give to my work is «creative investigation». I research in the domain of modal phenomena and the perceptual aspects related to it. I conceive art as the ability of modulating vibrations, mostly – but not only - in the form of sound and light, kinetically propagating in space and in relation to the physical and psychical human nature.

What's your background?

I've studied Music Informatics at the end of the 80's while I was already busy composing electronic and experimental music. In the 90's I started developing my own ideas and techniques for connecting sound and image/light towards those aspects that now characterize my creative activity: sensory-fusion and immersivity. The main influences and artistic references are multiple and range from different fields of art and science: from Nikola Tesla to Ilya Prigogine, from the Darmstadt school, Max Matthews, and other early pioneers of computer music (Risset, Chowning, Truax) to industrial music and field recordings, from Brion Gysin to Granular Synthesis, from the Amsterdamse School of architecture to Morphoechology...

Why did you produce Optofonica?

I found it necessary to create a context that could facilitate the production and diffusion of ideas and artworks in the joint domain of Synesthetic Media and Sound Spatialization. Over fifty sound and visual artists responded enthusiastically to my initial proposal and finally joined various initiatives which progressively developed in sometimes unpredictable directions. This was also part of my own personal agenda: to initiate a project that would really surprise myself and enrich my knowledge and awareness in diverse field of "creative investigations". For me the best result of this process has been the creation of a laboratory in Amsterdam, active since February 2009, the core group of which is formed by Evelina Domnitch, Dmitry Gelfand and myself. Together we now work on Art-Science projects that mostly materialize in immersive installations and performances. The laboratory also works in osmosis with a number of associated artists, scientists and institutes. With them we're about to initiate series of events – named Synergetica – which aim to diffuse this idea of hybridized artistic practice.

Did artists produce special works?

It's not on me to say how "special" these works are. I must say that the reviews I've read so far testify the unicity of this compilation and it's certainly rare to find such a consistent anthology of experimental audiovisual works. It took me almost four years to compile such a release and I'm very satisfied of the result and I must thank again all the artists who freely contributed. I had suggested them to experiment with a combination of more or less abstract visuals and spatial sound that would reflect their own interpretation of "synesthesia". To listen to the dvd in 5.1 surround sound is compulsory.

The "Optofonica Capsule" is going to be shown at Transmediale amongst other international events. Can you explain a bit more about this installation and why one should experience artworks in this way?

The Capsule is a prototype for some sort of "portable" immersive environment, especially dedicated to audiovisual art. It features a Tactile Sound platform where the low frequencies are converted into haptic vibration, from the feet straight into the bone system – and thereafter the brain – of the listener. Five panels, constructed with a custom sandwich of carbon fiber and honeycomb acoustic foam, are resonated by special transducers for a spherical surround sound propagation. As a matter of fact there are no speakers there: the structure of the Capsule itself is a super-sensorial sound diffuser. A flat screen is positioned to cover most of the visual field of the spectator to engage sight at a short distance and panoramic vision. The full program – as featured on the dvd – is played in the Capsule with uncompressed video and multichannel sound.

Your performances are concerned with the idea of synesthesia and the creation of a new state of mind by watching and listening to certain frequencies. Can you explain more about this idea?

Today I'm working more with pure light rather than screen-based compositions/projections as I did in the past. My recent composition and performance "pv868" well marks this passage, using a video projection as an intermedium between the light and the brain. No real image is appearing on the screen but a stroboscopic colored light: this causes a peculiar phenomenon that each viewer will experience differently. The interference between the flickering light and the brainwaves (unique for each viewer), produces the apparition of flowing geometric patterns and glows of various colored shapes, not on the retina but inside the individual brain. The "vision" is modulated by each spectator's physical presence and psychological state. The sound too operates with the same principle; the interference of two specific sounds coming from opposite directions create a third one that doesn't exist out but inside the brain. Both sound and light entrain the brainwaves towards the respective frequencies, hence changing in the "inner" vision. This emancipates the artwork from objective interpretations and opens a new territory for both the experience and the critic.

What is the best venue you performed?

Elektra festival in Montreal stands out for the quality of the technical facilities, the hospitality and the audience. They truly understand how important it is to provide proper means for the "immersive experience". I also admire Sonic Acts in Amsterdam for their dedication to computer art and constant focus on important thematics of contemporary art practices.

What's the future of live cinema?

Photosonic immersive environments for the inner vision.

Will there be another DVD release in the future?

Hopefully a BluRay disc and/or other unconventional supports that can preserve the quality of both multichannel audio and video. DVD is an obsolete and low-quality format.