

Music and Synesthesia

Abstracts from a Conference in Vienna, scheduled for July 3–5, 2020

Jörg Jewanski, Sean A. Day, Saleh Siddiq, Michael Haverkamp,
and Christoph Reuter (Eds.)



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Boston's WGBH, brought color music to a mass audience and demonstrated the importance of interactivity in creating meaningful sound-color associations on screen. Interactivity links the filmic expression of color music directly to other forms of music visualization, including VJ-ing, which emerged in the discos of Chicago and New York in the 1970s, and videogaming, particularly through the demoscene, an underground digital arts subculture that was dedicated to the production of complex sound-color artworks using videogame hardware.

The paper concludes by looking forward to the opportunities provided by virtual and augmented realities (VR and AR respectively), which, at their best, engage and excite multiple senses simultaneously to create compelling simulated environments that are designed expressly for human interaction. As such, they represent significant platforms for extending traditional screen media to provide an immersive sensory way of exploring synesthetic performance: freed from the constraints of the physical world and the need to replicate the function and sensation of sensory cues within it, VR and AR can be designed specifically to create vivid, immersive multi- and cross-sensory experiences that would not otherwise be possible.

MuVi. An international project on synesthesia and visual music

María José de Córdoba Serrano & Dina Riccò

The paper presents the international MuVi project—video and moving image on synesthesia and visual music—started in 2007 thanks to the collaboration between the *Artecittà Foundation*, the University of Granada and the Politecnico di Milano.

MuVi is an exhibition, and editorial, project that was created in conjunction with the organization of the *II International Synaesthesia Conference: Science & Art* (Granada, 2007) with the aim of giving perceptible, extensive (and synesthetic) feedback to the theoretical contents addressed in the conference.

MuVi—acronym for *Musica Visiva* (“Visual Music”)—has collected video projects with a call for kinetics works, an invitation to artists, musicians, designers, performers, academic authors, professors and students of universities, academies and conservatories to submit any kind of digital “moving image”, only visual or audio and interactive kinetic projects.

Alongside synesthesia, the central theme of the project is visual music, understood in a *lata* meaning, as any sort of kinetic audio or video representation that springs from music. The relations between visual and auditory, that we found in the collected works, show a great variety of combinations: they are the result of synesthetic perceptions (visual as mental image suggested by music); the result of research on the analogies between visual and musical languages (rhythm, tone, texture, colour, etc.); they can be expressed by abstract or figurative languages not necessarily supported by a narrative plot.

The paper analyzes the video products participating in the five editions—MuVi (Granada, 2007), MuVi2 (Granada, 2009), MuVi3 (Almeria, 2012), MuVi4 (Alcalá la Real, Jaén, 2015), MuVi5 (Alcalá la Real, Jaén, 2018)—making a mapping of the current concept of visual music which examines, in addition to design choices, aesthetic and synesthetic, the disciplinary approach and geographical origin.

International diversity is a great merit of the scientific project: the participants are for the most part coming from the countries that have organized the event—Spain and Italy—that alone pick up around half of the videos, but the participation is broadly international, Europe, United States, and even from New Zealand.

The latest edition, MuVi5, is characterized by the increased awareness of the relationships of video designed on music, as well as the high compositional and technical complexity of the solutions, undoubtedly facilitated by the evolution of audio/video software that facilitates new aesthetic experiments.

The solutions are inevitably varied, and even in the prevalence of visual compositions at a high level of abstraction, in which figures that

do not have immediate reference to the represented reality dominate, the “sensorial rendering” of visual translation ranges from organic texture to compositions based on basic geometrical figures.

Comparing the works, we note in fact this expressive axis that finds at its extremes, on one side, the organic (material) and, on the other, the geometric simplification (graphic), then the dominance of the materiality (water, earth, surfaces, etc.) opposed to the rigor of geometry based on figures in rhythmic sequence or organized in texture.

The applications are predominantly for desktop video enjoyment; but there are cases in which environmental and architectural immersion is required which, using video mapping technologies, creates suggestive illusionistic effects.

Authors who deal professionally with visual music dominate and, as we can read in the biographies, have rich exhibition experience in internationally known events and festivals. We believe that one of the merits of the initiative is also to be recognized in having chosen to invest and leave a record of the work done. From what is known to us, MuVi is the only visual music festival that regularly collects and prints in book and DVD format, the selections of the participating videos, documenting and relating a total of about 130 videos with the respective groups and authors, some of whom are faithful since the first edition (see archive in: <http://muvi-visualmusic.tumblr.com>). Recently MuVi was selected by the *ADI Design Index 2019*, a prestigious award in the field of Design.

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Synesthesia and Digital Perception 2019: The visual music scene and multisensory sound-based practices in Brazil

Sérgio Basbaum

It is not possible to separate human cognition development from human cultural development (Durt, 2017). In the specific case of synesthesia, it suffices to notice that it would be impossible to experience grapheme-color synesthesia in an illiterate society to realize the many aspects in which the relations between synesthesia and culture are still undiscussed. With the concept of “digital perception” (Basbaum, 2005, 2012), I have tried, since the early 2000’, to shed a light over the way digital culture is shaping our modes of perception, and the cultural forms that emerge as a result of such on-going media-ecology changes. One of the most noticed aspects of digital culture, since its early days, is the emergence of more active spectatorship and multisensory cultural forms, among them VJing and many Visual-Music practices that found their sets in contemporary urban culture. The present work aims to examine some of the groups which are practicing visual-music performance in contemporary Brazilian scene, the works of [a.cinema:] (Dino Vicente, Rodrigo Gontijo, Sérgio Basbaum), *Telemusik* (Dudu Tsuda, Marcus Bastos), *Felipe Merker & Alessandra Bochio*, *Clássicos de Calçada* (Tatiana Travisani, Deco Zido), and relate them to other forms of multisensory practices in contemporary technological culture.

→ *The colors of musical instruments: An intercultural comparison on timbre-color mappings with non-synesthetes in Austria/Germany and in Madagascar*, pp. 113–115

Dina Riccò

Dina Riccò is an associate professor at the Department of Design, Politecnico di Milano. She has a degree in Architecture (1990), and a Ph.D. in Industrial Design (1997). Since 2007, she has participated in organizing the international conference *Synaesthesia: Science and Art*, promoted by the *ArteCittà Foundation*; she is also director of the parallel event *MuVi*, devoted to visual music. Overall, she has written over 100 publications. Among her key publications are *Sinestesia per il design* (1999), *Sentire il design* (2008), and *Synaesthesia: Theoretical, artistic and scientific foundations* (with María José de Cordoba, Sean A. Day et al., 2012 [Spanish edition] and 2014 [English edition]).



🌐 <http://muvi-visualmusic.tumblr.com/>
<http://www.sinestesia.it>

→ *MuVi. An international project on synesthesia and visual music*, pp. 153–156

Svetlana Rudenko

🌐 www.svetlana-rudenko.com

→ *Symbolist composer Alexander Scriabin: Reception history and his synesthesia: Music analysis for Sonata No. 9 and Préludes op. 74*, pp. 109–110

Music and Synesthesia

Jörg Jewanski, Sean A. Day, Saleh Siddiq, Michael Haverkamp,
and Christoph Reuter (Eds.)

Synesthesia is a remarkable phenomenon: it unites scientists and artists, scholars and laymen, as well as different disciplines such as neuroscience, psychology, musicology, art history, philosophy, and linguistics. It is ‘the’ interdisciplinary issue par excellence. This book provides the abstracts of a scientific-artistical conference “Music and Synesthesia” in Vienna, scheduled for July 3–5, 2020, with participants from different countries inside of Europe, from North, Central, and South America, and even from Australia.

Synästhesie ist ein bemerkenswertes Phänomen: Es vereint Wissenschaftler, Künstler, Fachleute und Laien sowie verschiedene Forschungsfelder wie Neurowissenschaften, Psychologie, Musikwissenschaft, Kunstgeschichte, Philosophie und Sprachwissenschaften. Es ist ‚das‘ interdisziplinäre Thema schlechthin. Diese Buch sammelt die Abstracts einer wissenschaftlich-künstlerischen Tagung zu Musik und Synästhesie in Wien, geplant vom 3. bis 5. Juli 2020, mit Beiträgen aus verschiedenen Ländern Europas, Nord-, Mittel- und Südamerikas, und sogar aus Australien.

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