CYBER-BIRDS
mobile multimedia sculptures

....once proud birds populated the planet, parading through the land with their beautiful plumage and giving out their lonesome cries. Now that place has given way to a the cold modern world. The birds have adapted and up-graded: metamorphasized into multimedia creatures, their hallucogenic plumages recall a childhood's past as their sounds echo through a heartless jungle....

AUDIO PEACOCK: a wearable electronic instrument constructed out of polycarbonat (plexi-glass) equipped with loudspeakers, amplifier, battery and different sound-making devices (microphone, sampler, radio receiver, interactive sensors).
As VIDEO PEACOCK the costume functions also as a mobile screen onto which theme-specific visualizations (movies, pictures, internet blogs, computer-enhanced images and closed circuit camera views) are projected.

Project description: a multimedia environment in an urban space.

This wearable electroacoustic instrument is shaped into a peacock's fan-like plumage and is highly directional -- projecting the sound into a space like an oversized radar dish. Much in the same way that the courtyard peacock "strutts his stuff" in front of a pea-hen and imposes with his awesome cry, so does the Audio Peacock stalk his architectural domain -- using sound as a scalpel that cuts through air and sculpts it, transforming it to into his new realm.

An Audio Peacock can either amplify and alter its own voice or electronic instruments using a microphone, sampler, and filters (loop + pitch), play pre-recorded sounds, or receive sounds via transmitter/receiver. However this is not a permanent performance-event, it is a sound installation that occurs over a period of time: much like a peacock inhabits a courtyard or farmland -- this animal marks his terrain and metamorphasizes it, letting out its calls at odd moments when we don't expect them.

As VIDEO PEACOCKS (wearing white plexiglass „skins") 4 of these electroacoustic birds patrol a more limited space and darkened environment. Their audio costumes double as mobile projection screens: whenever their paths intersect the light of a video projector the costumes metamorphasize into multi-colored screens. Colorful visualizations (movies, pictures, internet blogs, computer-enhanced images and closed circuit camera views) are "beamed" onto them as they play their sounds. As a site-specific and multi-phonic installation the parcours of these "cyber-birds" is choreographed vis-a-vis to the emplacement of the projectors in the architectural space.

Past work

Benoît Maubrey is the founder and director of DIE AUDIO GRUPPE a Berlin-based art group that build and perform with electroacoustic clothes. Basically these are electronic clothes and dresses (equipped with amplifiers and loudspeakers) that make sounds by interacting with their environment. The first prototypes in 1982 and 83 were created from second-hand clothes fitted with loudspeakers, batteries, and a small amplifier that played pre-recorded casettes via portable cassette decks (also known as "Walkmans"). In 1985 during an outdoor arts competition for the BundesgartenSchau in Berlin I developed the idea of "audio uniforms": custom-build suits and costumes that combine various thematic articles of clothing with site-specific electroacoustic equipment. The costumes are worn by performers who interact with the environment as mobile and multiacoustic sculptures.

In 1989 I started building the first "audio tutus" for the Ballerinas. At this point the Walkmans were replaced with samplers chips (from the surplus electronic supply catalogs) which enabled the dancers to spontaneously record, play back and manipulate sounds from their environment (the DIGITAL MEMORY piece). Eventually I also equipped the costumes with an assortment of electronic instruments that allowed me to orchestrate/choreograph them into various interactive musical compositions or "audio ballets" -- for example light sensors that enable them to produce sounds through the interaction of their movements and the surrounding light (PEEPER choreography). Via movement sensors they can also trigger electronic sounds that are subsequently choreographed --or "orchestrated"-- into musical compositions as "audio ballets" (YAMAHA choreography). A variety of other electronic instruments (mini-computers, samplers, contact microphones, cassette and CD players, and radio receivers) allow them to work with the sounds, surfaces, and topographies of the space around them in a variety of solo or group choreographies.

In the more recent AUDIO PEACOCKS project the "wearables" are shaped into a peacock's fan-like plumage and are highly directional -- projecting the sound into a space like an oversized radar dish. Much in the same way that the courtyard peacock „strutts his stuff" in front of a pea-hen and imposes with his awesome cry, so does the Audio Peacock stalk his architectural domain -- using sound as a scalpel that cuts through air and sculpts it, transforming it to into a new realm.

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Primarily Die Audio Gruppe's work is site-specific: the main emphasis of the work is to adapt electronics into entirely new "Audio Uniforms" or "sonic costumes" that reflect local customs, themes, or traditions (AUDIO GEISHA/Japan, AUDIO CYCLISTS/France, AUDIO STEELWORKERS/ Linz, AUDIO VACUUM CLEANERS/Berlin, AUDIO JEANS/ USA).

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION / Budget:

4 Video Peacock costumes
(the number of Video Peacocks can also vary according to the space: the budget accordingly).

Benoit Maubrey and Die Audio Gruppe supply all wearable technical equipment.
The partner must supply:

For 4 Video Peacocks:
-- 4 performers.
-- 4-6 video projectors with DVD players and/or computers.
-- technical assistance (3 people).
-- travel expenses (airfare, hotel + per diem for 2 weeks) for 2 people from Berlin.
-- equipment transport for 4 costumes (size when rolled up: 100 X 100 X 200, weight: each 30 kg) and 2 normal suitcases.
-- rehearsal space for 2 days. On-site setup: 1 night.
-- artists fee: 3000 euros.

CV: Benoît Maubrey
Performances, Festivals and Installations (a selection):

2007 IM AUGE DES KLANGS , Schloss Moyland/ Joseph Beuys Archive.
-- INGENUITY, Cleveland Festival for Arts and Technology.
-- Digital Arts Week, Zurich.
2006 ROBODOK Festival, Amsterdam.
  -- Taipei Digital Arts Festival, Taiwan.
  -- Sitelines Festival, NYC..
  -- SIGGRAPH, Boston.
  -- Digital Arts Week, Zurich.
2005 „Forest" NABU Landesverband Saarbrücken, Horspaziergang AUDIO PEACOCK.
2004 "Sonoric Atmospheres/Ostseebiennale der Klangkunst.
  -- AUDIO IGLOO, sound sculpture in the Singuhr-Hörgalerie, Parochial Church/Berlin.
  -- Thailand New Media Art Festival/Bangkok.
  -- LEM Festival (Gracia Territoria Sonor), Barcelona.
 2002 AUDIO BALLERINAS, Location One, NYC.
  -- HIGH FIDELITY production, Musiktheatre im Revier, Gelsennkirchen (co-production mit Berndt Schindowski).
  -- AUDIO PEACOCKS, Artist in Residence at Lieux Publics, Marseille.
  -- Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum fuer Gegenwartskunst, Berlin.
2001 KunstMuseum / Wolfsburg
  -- New Haven Festival for Arts and Ideas.
  -- Seoul Performing Arts Festival.
  -- Medi@terra, Athens.
  -- Musee des Arts et Industrie, Saint-Etienne.
  -- FETA Festival, Gdansk.
2000 Monaco Dance Danses Forum, Montecarlo.
  -- Tollwood Festival, Munich.
  -- Postdamer Musikfestspiele, Potsdam.
1999 IDAT (International Dance and Technology Conference),Phoenix, Arizona.
  --"Audio Ballerinas and Electronic Guys" , Theatre am Hallesches Ufer / Berlin.
  -- AUDIO IGLOO, commissioned electro-acoustic sculpture at Hull Time Based Arts, UK.
  -- Les Nuits Savoureuses de Belfort, France.
1998 MALTA Festival , Poznan, Poland.
  -- International Symposium for Elecronic Arts, Chicago.
1996 Sound Art Festival, Krakow.
1997 AUDIO GEISHAS, ICC-NTT Tokyo City Opera House.
  -- ISEA, Chicago.
  -- Ostranenie Festival, Stiftung Bauhaus / Dessau.
  -- SONAMBIENTE Sound Art Festival, Academy of Arts, Berlin.
  -- International Street Theatre Festival, Holzminden (1st Prize for „Mobility and Flexibilty").
  -- „Audio Ballerinas and Electronic Guys" Tour/ USA, The KITCHEN (NYC), Scena Theatre (Washington, D.C.).
  -- KRYPTONAL Festival, Berlin.
  -- 38eme Rugissants, Grenoble.
1995 Krakow (THE KRAKOVIAN MEETINGS).
  -- Sound Art Festival, Hannover.
1994 „Audio Drama", Theatre zum Westlichen Staathirschen, Berlin.
  -- International Symposium for Electronic Art, Helsinki.
  --"Audio Drama", co-production with Theatre zum Westichen Staathirschen, Berlin.
1993 MEDIALE, Hamburg.
  -- Art and Computers, University of Moscow.
  -- ULTIMA Festival, Oslo.
1992 Cleveland Performance Festival, Ohio.
   -- TISEA, Sydney.
1990 Festival les Arts au Soleil,, Aeronef Lille, France.
  -- Sound Symposium, St. John's, Newfoundland.
  -- „Urbane Aboriginale", Berlin.
1989 Festival PERSPECTIVES, Saarbrücken.
1988 Festival des Arts Electroniques, Rennes, France.
  --"Parcours Sonores", Musée de La Villette, Paris.
1996 STEIRISCHE HERBST, Graz, Austria.
   -- Galerie Giannozzo. Berlin.
1986 ARS ELECTRONICA, Linz, Austria.
  -- The Mattress Factory, Pittsburg, Pa.

Awards: Franklin Furnace Fund for Performance NYC 2006.
Selected Bibliography:
-- LEONARDO, Vol.28, No.2, pp.93-97,1995, Audio Jackets and Other Electroacosutic Clothes.
-- BENOIT MAUBREY/ DIE AUDIO GRUPPE, catalog 1985.
-- Die Audio Gruppe 1982-1998, catalog 1989.
-- PERFORMANCES WITH ELECTROACOUSTIC CLOTHES, DVD 2007.

Miscellaneous:
Workshop/ presentations (selection) at the MIT Media Lab, Oberlin College,
Johns Hopkins University, Virginia Commonwealth and Concordia Universities.