

## **Organised Sound: An International Journal of Music and Technology**

*Call for submissions*

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Visual music holds an important place at the cutting edge of today's art, but as a term it has been with us for almost a century. In 1912, art critic Roger Fry coined the term "visual music" in an attempt to describe Kandinsky's paintings, generally recognised to be the first purely abstract canvases. Connecting Kandinsky's non-representational art to the abstract nature of music was a way to explain and interpret this new art form. Today, the concept of visual music refers to visuals "composed and presented with aesthetic strategies and procedures similar to those employed in the composing or performance of music"<sup>1</sup>. Examples include abstract silent films music, works using manual, mechanical, or algorithmic means of transcoding sound to image, and even pieces which translate image into sound. Visual music has also come to refer to a cross-disciplinary practice, which originated in cinema in the 1930s through the work of filmmakers including Oskar Fischinger, Mary Ellen Bute, and Len Lye. By the 1950s a new generation of animators, including Norman McLaren, began the now commonplace practice of merging the roles of composer and filmmaker by creating sophisticated soundtracks to accompany their images. In the twenty-first century artists can finally perform visuals, whether frame-by-frame or in real time, with the same nuanced control that musicians have had for thousands of years.

Artists and musicians thought to be synaesthetes, such as Kandinsky and Scriabin, have played an important role in the development of visual music. Perhaps this is why the ability to create art that mimics the involuntary and instant synaesthetic experience in real-time has long been a paramount goal for many practitioners. While standout individual accomplishments of visual music performance occurred in the analog era, formidable economic barriers limited its development. The recent availability of inexpensive computer technology has allowed audio-visual performance practices, including improvisation, to become widespread, creating a vibrant community of musicians and filmmakers who constantly develop the field.

As animation historian William Moritz wrote, "Since ancient times artists have longed to create with moving lights a music for the eye comparable to the effects of sound for the ear. If they were less successful than composers of auditory music, the sole reason rests in the fact that light is harder to manipulate than air"<sup>2</sup>. The accessibility and adaptability of today's visual music technology makes it possible for

us to take the artistic possibilities of earlier analog efforts, such as ‘colour organs’, out of the museum and put them in the hands of millions of people.

The language of electroacoustic music is particularly suited for the abstract imagery of visual music. If music is organised sound then visual music is organised image. Just as sound art “can no longer be confined to the organisation of notes”<sup>3</sup> visual music needs to move beyond a vocabulary developed for static images and instead shift to a gestural language of time-based design. We hope this issue will encourage scholars from both the visual and sonic spheres who will draw upon the scholarship of experimental electroacoustic composition to create compelling investigations of any of the following topics:

Tension between sound and vision

Surveys and case studies regarding modern or historical visual music

Rhetorics for describing, analysing, and critiquing visual music

Ontologies of visual music, questions of medium-specificity and modernism

Synaesthesia and other cognitive approaches to the perception of visual music

Visual music as metaphor for intermedia/multimedia production

Visual music, experimental film, and classical film theory

Cantastoria, “lightning artists,” and the performance roots of animation

Artist and programmer collaboration then and now

Code as the “new new media”

Innovations in procedural graphics and sound

Generative algorithms as “conceptual” visual music

The rise of digital video, 1995–2005

New ideas in intermedia telematic collaboration

Kandinsky’s Point and Line to Plane and other algorithmic approaches to visual music

Projection mapping in performance

As always, submissions related to the theme are encouraged; however, those that fall outside the scope of this theme are always welcome.

Deadline for submissions is 15 October 2011. Submissions may consist of papers, with optional supporting short compositions or excerpts, audio-visual documentation of performances and/or other aspects related to your submission that can be placed onto a DVD and the CUP website for “Organised Sound”. Supporting audio and audio-visual material will be presented as part of the journal's annual DVD-ROM which will appear with issue 17/3 as well on the journal’s website.

1 McDonnell, Maura. 2007. “Visual Music.” In the Visual Music Marathon Program brochure.

2 Moritz, William. 1986. “Towards an Aesthetics of Visual Music.” ASIFA Canada Bulletin, Vol. 14:3, Montreal.

3 Wishart, Trevor. 1996. *On Sonic Art*. Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association. Pg 7.

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**SUBMISSION FORMAT:**

Notes for Contributors and further details can be obtained from the inside back cover of published issues of Organised Sound or at the following url:

<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayMoreInfo?jid=OSO&type=ifc>

(and download the pdf)

Properly formatted email submissions and general queries should be sent to: [os@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:os@dmu.ac.uk), not to the guest editors.

Hard copy of articles and images (only when requested) and other material (e.g., sound and audio-visual files, etc.—normally max. 15' sound files or 8' movie files) should be submitted to:

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