

Juan José Rivas*

A HYBRID TIME DEEP DOWN, IT'S ALL CONNECTED

We've stopped perceiving reality in simplistic, naturalistic ways. Complexity, saturation, and chaos have proven constant elements that intervene, distort, and offer up new readings of what we understand as reality. While at one time the role of art was to represent nature realistically, contemporary and electronic art have gained such complexity that they not only offer new possibilities and degrees of representation, but also draw from new sets of data and information.

The binomial art-science union has led us to explore new relationships and acquire a different understanding of the sensorial universe that these two disciplines encompass. Technological tools offer artists new, once unthinkable possibilities, like measuring, observing, and analyzing key data to decipher the conditions of our nature, thus configuring beauty in a different way.

Current artistic production involves a new set of disciplines that have included new tools and languages that might appear far-fetched or counterposed to each other, but that have helped expand the limits of art. Indeed, hybridity characterizes most contemporary artistic productions, which present themselves in diffused and mixed ways, sometimes even confusing the viewer.

Painting, photography, drawing, performance, installations, sculptures, dance, and music have been entangled to give life to art pieces and works that would seem to challenge our sensibilities and offer a far more complex and multidimensional perspective, sometimes leading us to question the limits of the artistic, and whether or not we really need a limit.

If we consider artistic work as just another activity or trade, we may realize that its processes and outcomes have varied over time and that technological tools have contributed greatly to such changes. On this point, proponents and detractors of technology —technophobes and technophiles— surely abound, but beyond establishing value judgements, the fact that technology has forged much of our culture and behavior is undeniable.

My artistic production includes a great deal of grappling with the tools and technological resources I deploy —considering how these can help or hinder my pursuits. Beyond their utilitarian or decorative functions, the elements in most of my pieces play an expressive role that often interplays or makes contact with a variety of techniques, disciplines, and resources, generating hybrids and new forms of language. Like syntactic exercises, most of my pieces aim to translate some of my artistic concerns into an intimate and personal poetic exploration using an invented language.

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Photos courtesy of the author.

Self-Isolation Soundscapes



This project consists of a series of soundscapes recorded from my studio window throughout the Covid-19 lockdown. A video-journal of sorts with three-minute daily recordings, the soundscapes of Downtown Mexico City (where my studio is located), are recorded and processed using several digital effects and analogue synthesizers, generating one film piece per day to be published on my Instagram channel: @jrivasmx.

In parallel to the digital film registration, two recordings in physical flexi disc format serve as postcard-sized vinyl records.

#artesonoro #fieldrecordings #video #artelectronico
#artepostal #musicaexperimental



Chinto Rage

By developing a character who is part *chinelero* (a traditional dancer whose costume mocks European colonizers), part cholo, part punk, and part goth, this performance and experimental music project reflects upon migration processes: the radical change involved does not merely lie in physical movement, but also in processes of hybridization and transculturation, which, in turn, generate their own issues to grapple with. To create this character, we designed and made a costume using wearable technology, allowing for dance and movement on stage, with the music produced and controlled through Bluetooth sensors on the costume.

#musicaexperimental #performance #artesonoro #wearabletech

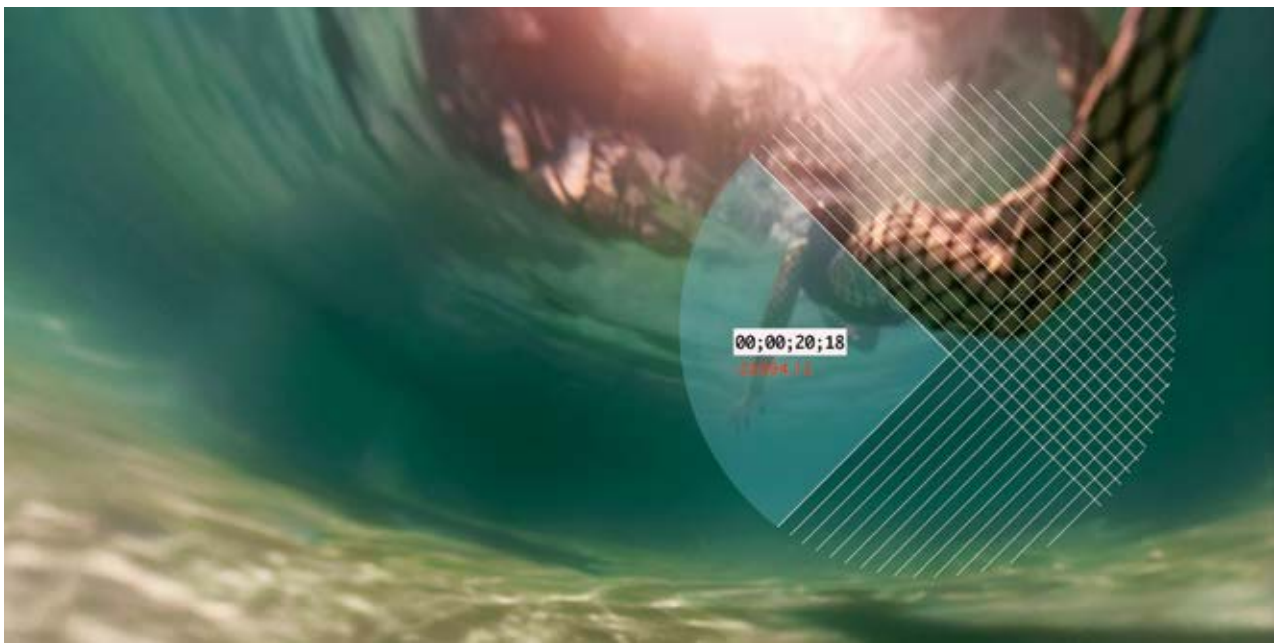
This inflatable, scented sculpture created for the Perfume Museum in Mexico City draws on scent to question the seduction process. The piece is named after the plant *Cynoglossum officinale*, or “Dog tongue,” a species in the borage (forget-me-not) family that is esoterically used to create fragrances that promise domination over the desired person, and their subsequent surrender.

Operating like a totem or ritual sculpture, this piece questions the construction of desire, seduction, and scent, as well as its various sociocultural strategies, in order to show that seduction inevitably oscillates between two poles: strategy and animality, moving from the most subtle of calculations, to more brutal, physical suggestion.

#escultura #instalacion #performance #arteelectronico

Brutal Hound





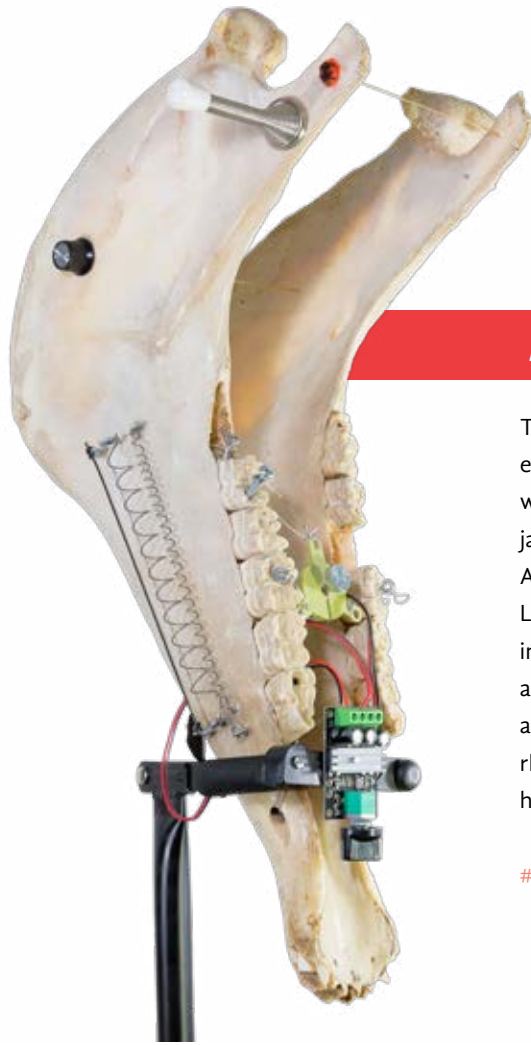
S: Swimming

This concert/film installation stems from the act of swimming and processes a set of biometric data in order to visualize and add sound to the piece, including a 360° video and spatialized quadrophonic sound. This piece has two formats: one immersive video installation in 360° or virtual-reality format, and a live coding concert, with the video and sound editing generated and controlled in real time.

S: Swimming is part of a set of sound actions based on multiple body movements that aims to generate a dialogue with various physical concepts on the symbolic level through improvisation, error, chance, and instability in order to describe some of the phenomena of modernity.

[#visualizaciondedatos](#) [#performance](#) [#artesonoro](#) [#livecoding](#) [#video360°](#)





M: Murmur

This sound piece created for an ensemble of six percussion instruments was designed based on the donkey jawbone or *charrasca*, an instrument of African origin used throughout much of Latin America. The jawbones were intervened and modified using motors and dental supports in order to automate the percussion instruments' rhythm and speed, thus generating a hybrid, electro-acoustic instrument.

#performance #artesonoro #musicaexperimental

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As I noted above, most contemporary art production is characterized by its hybridity: today's art has woven a mesh whose flexible, organic structure allows us to shift between a variety of disciplines, techniques, and formats, thus yielding different artistic discourses.

I'd like to think of art not as a discipline that explicitly and directly communicates and expresses, but as a tool for thought that questions and investigates the structures of our various languages and our need for them, or as an instrument that allows us to approach reality in new, multiple, complex, and perhaps unfathomable ways.

If every artistic discourse is a reflection of its time and context, then we find ourselves at a time in which art and its myriad artistic pieces hold hybridity, fragmentation, instability, fleetingness, and convulsion in common. The question is no longer "What is art?" but, "What is art producing and how?"

As the French philosopher and historian George Didi Huberman would note, "The matter, then, lies in how to determine, each time, in every image, what exactly the hand has done, how it has done it, and why, and what purpose this manipulation holds. For better or worse, we use our hands: we throw punches or we caress, we build or we destroy, we give or we take. Before every image, we must ask ourselves how it looks (at us), thinks (of us), and touches (us) at the same time."¹ **MM**

Notes

¹ George Didi Huberman, "Como abrir los ojos," foreword to Harim Farocki, *Desconfiar de las imágenes* (Buenos Aires: Caja Negra, 2013).