Text on practice
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Lens-based Media 2023 – 2024

This year I have been researching ways of perceiving and ways of deploying colours and light. I have been nurturing growing interest towards the writing of software for creating digital animations and I have been engaging with the landscape in the practice of observing and documenting its atmospherical changes. In the following pages I will present and discuss two projects that I developed during this year and outline what I want to do next.

In the work *For Seven Time We Woke Up* developed for the Eye Research Labs, I have been studying the technological staging of colours - as editable materialities in the context of software editing and software development - and their effects on perception. I started this process after founding, during a bike tour in Rotterdam organised by Leslie Robbins, *Becoming Invisible, a* book from Ian Whittlesea.

Still from the book *Becoming Invisible*, pages 43-44

The book presents a meditation exercise based on breathing techniques and the imaginative synthesis of colour clouds, which lead the practitioner to reach the esoteric purpose of becoming invisible. At the age of 11 I had a similar experience. At that time my mother was carrying on a variation of this type of meditation aimed at healing, successfully she later said, a disease. Under her guide I experienced the exercise myself, which, I recall, resulted in a feeling of deep relaxation and strong physical awareness.
With the idea of translating the book of Ian Whittlesea into a moving-image piece, I firstly tried to use on-screen text to give directions on the steps to follow, but after trying this route, I decided to avoid giving any direct instruction and to focus solely on the evolution of a colour choreography and the composition of a layered sonic drone.

Rather than asking to my audience to follow a meditation, I decided to work towards the presentation of a time-based experience - an immersive journey that I would describe in terms of 'atmospherical storytelling'.
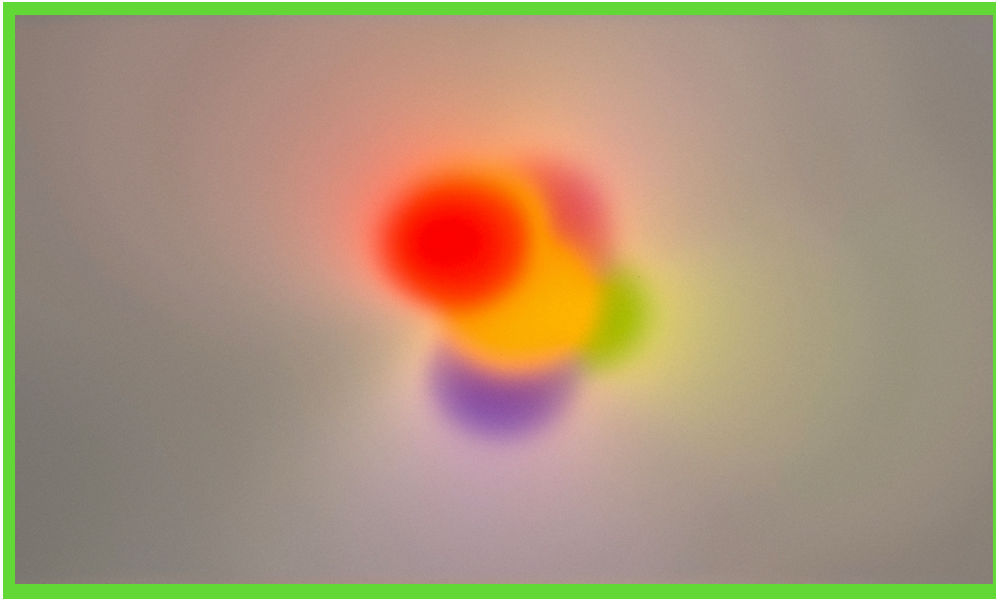
Still from *For Seven Times We Woke Up*

Another instance of this research on light and colours, that took place between the present and the past year, is the film *Yellow Message*, composed of three shots featuring the observation of atmospherical changes. How does the light change over the course of an hour? How is it refracted when the leaves are moved by wind? How does it encounter the textile of a flag upon which the shadow of a nearby tree is cast? This film combines footage that I took in Sansepolcro (IT) during a period of study to learn the practice of flag waving, with two other different recordings made in a little swamp situated in the south of Rotterdam. The three scenes that form the short movie are formally associated by the presence of the colour yellow, while the main subjects are light, wind and their way of interacting with different surfaces. Developing this project I have been inspired by the research on cyclic time by Janneke van der Putten, the minimalist cinema practice of James Benning and the 'landscape theory' (Matsuda, 1971).

Still from *Yellow Message*

Throughout these two movies I explored concepts such as opacity and transparency, and how the physical dynamics of overlaying and overlapping construct images. These are for me metaphors of an approach oriented towards the appreciation of phenomena that take place all around us, from site-specific locations to synthetic landscapes, from the light emitted by the sun to the one rendered by computational engines.

Both light and sound act in the range of a spectrum of waves, the first through electromagnetic waves, the second through acoustic waves.
In the past years in my practice as a composer I have been working with sounds by developing my own software to compose music through DSP (digital signal processing) techniques as filters, reverbs, resonators and distortions.
This year I developed a new sound performance that I presented in Porto (Sonoscopia, PT), where I treat sound recordings of a french horn being played by musician Luca Medioli as if they are light waves filtered by prisms: the sound waves are filtered and displaced through digital means. Inspired by the music made by composer Phill Niblock, based on continuous sustained sounds derived by the audio editing of sampled bowed instruments, and more in general by drone music, I am expanding my research towards the creation of audio- visual slowly evolving atmospheres.

In similar ways, this year, with *For Seven Times We Woke Up,* I have been working with light as I would with sound: through digital filters that alter the perception of an original image. My workflow on this project started with the mathematical task of putting together pieces of code. With these I was able to manipulate and alter sounds and images in expressive ways. After this stage, I explored the combination of these techniques and composed the piece by tuning the parameters that define the system's behaviour. In this way I was able to create a score composed of different settings, and to move between these through smooth evolutions of generative and automated movements.

I first started to compose audio-visual scores and build instruments in this way back in 2018 when collaborating with choreographer Ariella Vidach on dance pieces that involved, other than dancers, the combination of different medias - sounds, light, videos, robots.

Creating my own software to make animations involved another relevant challenge: exporting high quality images. The computational efforts required by high resolution settings was too high for the computer in my possession to be able to generate and compute 24 frames per second. For this reason I came up with my own code to render the video output in a "non-real time" fashion. This means: instead of generating 24 fps or more and recording the result, the computer computes each frame taking all the time it needs for it to be properly exported, before starting to render the following one. Once the desired amount of frames is computed, they can be combined together inside a video editing software. This is a workflow that I have been following for two years and during the creation of this movie I reached a stage of usability that gives me a good base for further use and development.
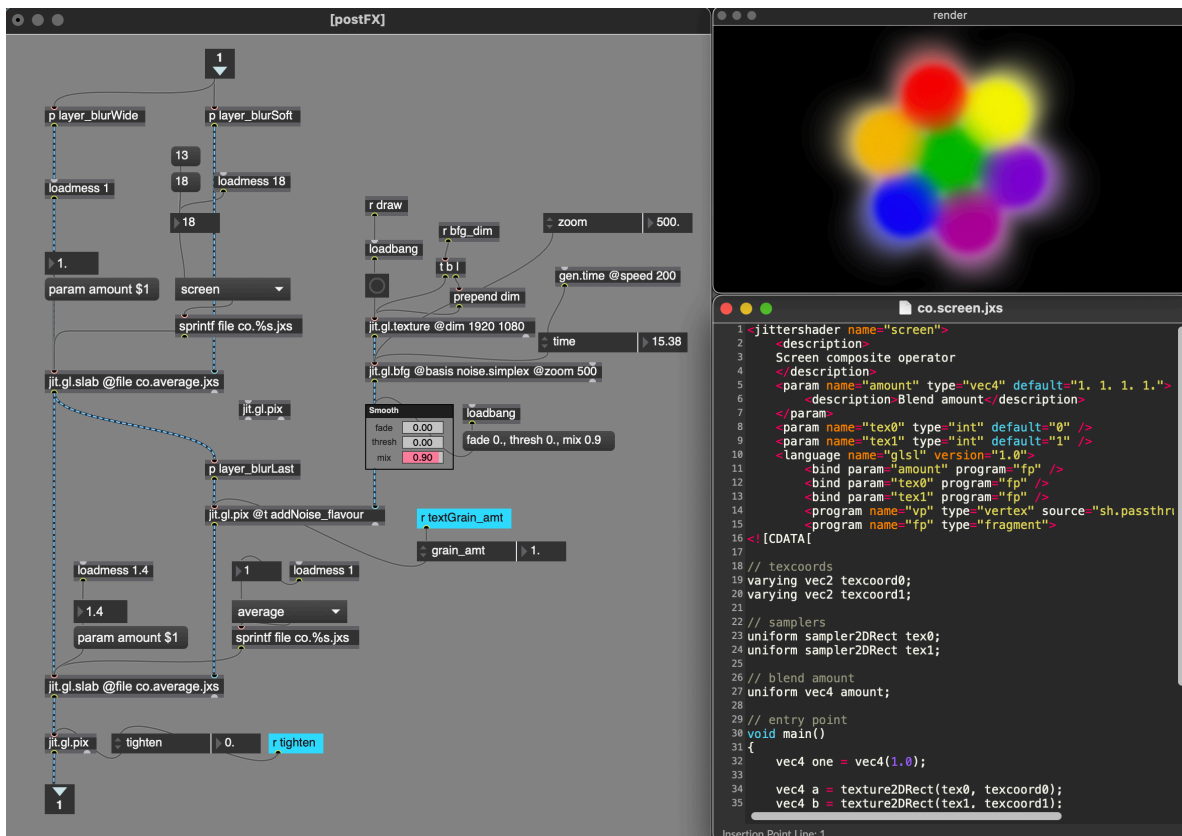
Composite processing pipe-line in *For Seven Times We Woke Up*
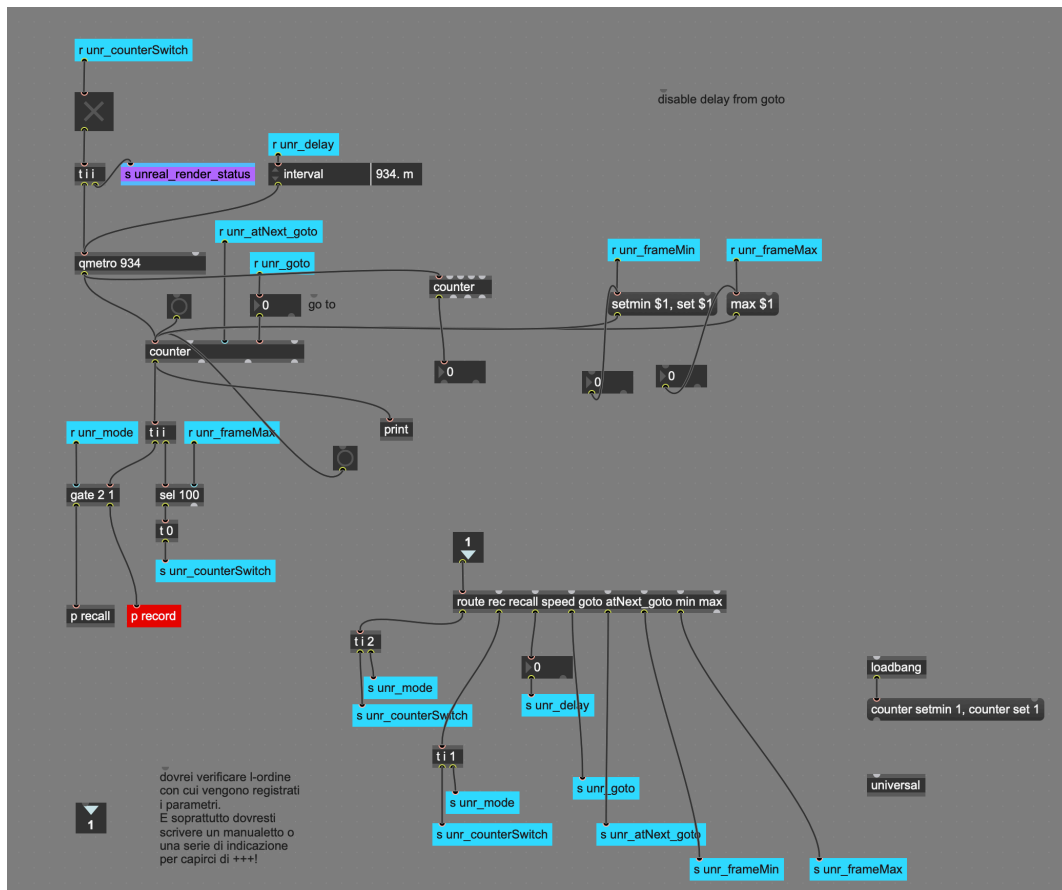
Non real-time engine

As a continuation of my research in the field of digital animation, and with the desire of combining it with a narrative structure, I am planning on working on a project that combines all these aspects. In particular, I want to continue the research I started with the installation *Enter the* ♥, presented last summer in Bruges (BE). This is an animation movie composed of a looping video installed in a white cube, and is inspired by the "Pentolaccia" tradition, mostly known as Piñata. The pentolaccia is a container filled with treats that is broken as part of a celebration that occurs in different cultures, during different occasions. The essence of this practice is that of celebrating abundance.

The installation presented was a visual and sonic experience and now I have the awareness and the tools required to tell the story behind it - as much as the desire to do so.
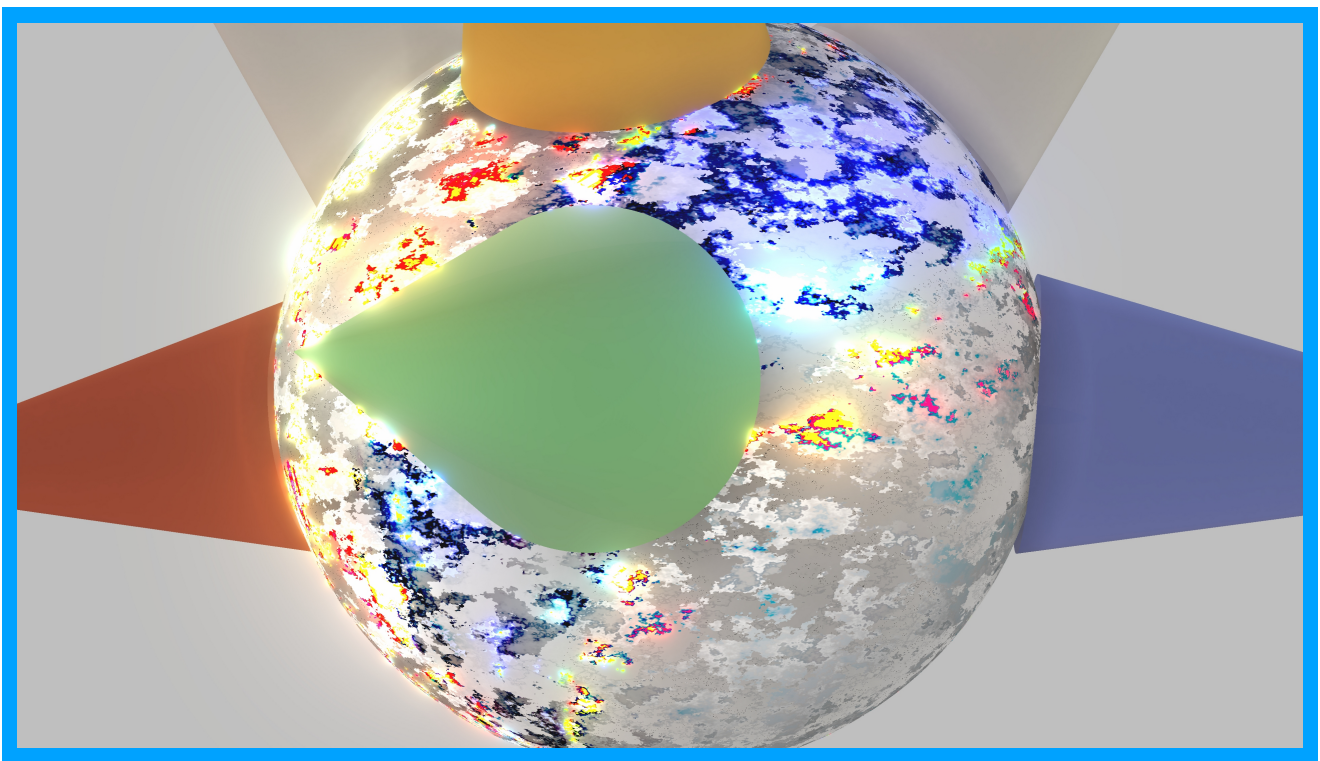
Still from *Enter the* ♥

Reference of how a pentolaccia can look like

I started to think about this project three years ago, when watching my brother playing a video game, *Diablo III*. One of the main features of this game is that of building up the power of your avatar by finding rare items that you can wear, from weapons to armors and gems, while traversing dangerous dungeons. The boss fights (fights against particularly strong characters) would resemble the 'Pentolaccia' celebration, as the body of the slain opponent, often monstrous, would spill coins and precious artefacts as much as graphic blood: treasures and treats all around, labelled with colour codes that highlight the rarity of these items.

Developing this project, I want to explore our dreams of being heroes, of making great deeds by slaying monsters, overproducing wealth and searching for fast satisfactions.

We fill the jar for months and then we break it to make a party, but when there is no effort, no work, no struggle to gather and save, what do we have to celebrate (Han, 2020)?

During Kate Briggs seminar, I found relevant, among others, our talks about Le Guin (1986) on the carrier bag theory. This theory advocates the need to gather bundles rather than casting arrows, and led me to further feel the need to work on this project, seeing in Pentolaccia tradition a good vessel to conveys this urge.

After attending the course seminars I feel more familiar with, and therefore able to employ, narrative devices and storytelling to contextualise and expand my research.

References

Ian Whittlesea - Becoming Invisible, 2014
Janneke van der Putten - Directed to the sun, 2014
James Benning - Ten Skies, 2004
Phill Niblock - Touch Three, 2006
Byung-Chul Han - The Disappearance of Rituals: A Topology of the Present, 2020
Ursula K. Le Guin - The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction, 1986