

(meta)liminal:

Expanded Perspectives, Subjectivity, Sensation, and The Ephemeral Object (of Curiosity and Desire) in the work of Skoltz_Kolgen
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Skoltz_Kolgen create liminal worlds that exist in the nebulous territory between inner and outer space. Penetrating the ephemeral skin between solid matter and the unsubstantiated, the intimate and the objective, their work conjures bewitched worlds that gestate betwixt accident and intent. This liminal quality bleeds into all aspects of Skoltz_Kolgen's practice, from the conceptual to the technical, as they balance on the cusp of art, magic and science. Liberated by digital media they simultaneously assume numerous positions, inhabiting a space between film, photography, audio art, and installation. Their synergistic practice encompasses expanded cinema, explorations of the subtle and visceral qualities of sound, and hybrid forms of digitally enabled synaesthesia. Architects of worlds that simultaneously inhabit us as we inhabit them, Skoltz_Kolgen inquisitively seek out the intimate material and ineffable substance of life.

Creative Perspectives

There is a fascination with the matter of being, the corporeal, and how the body interfaces with technology. The acts of seeing, hearing, and feeling - and the idea of a penetrating vision enhanced by technology as well as a penetrating technology - is never far from the surface. Equally present is a fascination with and exploration of a digitally enabled synaesthesia, of transposing sensory experiences and creating immersive ones using tools that are presently at a liminal stage in their evolution. Poised at the crest of technological evolution, the artists create new ways to extend their vision and voice through inventing digital interfaces such as Loeefrek, and using special screens and innovative processes.

Through these new tools and processes Skoltz_Kolgen effectively generate a pluriscopic vision. Silent Room (2004), an example of expanded cinema that used digitally synchronised cameras and animated still photography, dislocates the viewer through offering multiple perspectives that disengage specificity from an object/individual. The urge to break down boundaries between screen and viewer to offer an expanded experience of perspective is also evident in Epiderm and the installation version of fluxx:/terminal. In the instance of fluxx:/terminal the translucent, hanging screens engage the dimensionality of space and ultimately propose that the viewer choose a perspective thus challenging the convention of the passive, immobile observer forced into a monoscopic perspective controlled by the artist.

For Epiderm, while the artists propose the position of the viewer, the perspective remains ambiguous and scale also comes under scrutiny. Prone under a large, suspended, circular screen, scattered bodies lie gazing up at a sky of abstract images; the screen becomes an infinite, engulfing universe that evokes the vast luminosity of outer space. But the sounds and odd noises of life - artificial and organic, intended and ambient - that accompany the images draw the audience within the body and the experience of a pulsating, visceral, inner space. From this perspective the imagery transforms from a dance between heavenly bodies into an abstract narrative of cellular life, life and the universe are literally and metaphysically turned inside out. As the macro and the micro converge, nanobiotechnology and space travel appear to be merely inversions of scale and perspective.

The Transparency of Human Being

One of the defining aesthetics in Skoltz.Kolgen's work is a pronounced transparency and delicacy. Visually this can manifest as flickering filaments of light that interweave to create three-dimensional landscapes on the screen, or layered textures of images and light that crackle and pulse with electric life. At times dancing arcs of luminescence evoke whimsical technological sprites flitting across the screen, or shooting stars illuminating the dark expanses of outer space. At other times the screens themselves take on this transparent quality, as in *Flüxx:/Terminal* where they become translucent membranes illuminated by the projector's brilliant synaptic flash.

These transparent and delicate qualities also manifest in Skoltz.Kolgen's audio work, whether created as a component of installations or as distinctly audio works. Transparency is literally both the material and subject in the case of *Hyalin* (CD release on Line Records, 2003). Using macro-photographs of forms of glass, Skoltz.Kolgen transposed the qualities of transparency, opacity and density into a tonal system to create "aural pigments" and a synaesthetic exploration of the visual through sound. Ultimately both light and sound are waves and particles of information that we interface through our senses and neurological hardware, and it is these waves and particles that are the very material of Skoltz.Kolgen's creations.

On the audio-only version of *Flüxx:/Terminal* (Mutek Rec, 2004) crystalline shards of sound overlay a microsampled vocal's soft, percussive mumble. Bubbling under the brilliant noises and technological crackles the soft rhythms hum and murmur like sighs and gentle heartbeats, ambient mundane sounds that often percolate at the edge of conscious awareness. Intensely bright tones fade into the atmosphere weaving in and out of the highest frequencies to challenge the boundaries of human hearing; at times it is as if they reach their bright, spindly fingers into the very matter of the body. Once again we're engaged in a liminal space that sensually evokes the permeable and often subliminal intimate boundaries of the human body and senses, as well as our relationship to the environment and our own being. Sensitively attuned to the delicate details of human interaction and the thrum of ambient noises, Skoltz.Kolgen carefully and consciously hold the small sounds and motions of life up for observation.

The Small Matter of Life

Life, in both the biological and experiential sense, is a central concern in the work of Skoltz.Kolgen. They exhibit a fascination with the details of human experience, with the intimate spaces between people, and the corporeal sounds and rhythms of being alive. Patiently they record the many silences that accumulate and are an oft forgotten aspect of communication. Skoltz.Kolgen explore the liminal as both boundary and bridge, and from biological, emotional and technological perspectives. The interfaces created, and the real-time manipulations of sound and image during performance, all point to an extension of the human senses through technology. The installation of screens that break the conventions of viewing, and the use of three-dimensional animations, are all means to break down the boundaries between the viewer and the screen (both the viewer's habitual monoscopic perspective and the flat space of the screen itself). The way sound is used to create sensory bio awareness in the listener, to pierce the body through the senses, all accumulate to create a synthesized and immersive experience that engulfs the viewer. The skin, the eardrum, the screen, the lens, all the fragile liminal sensual and technological membranes that ensure our separateness and mediate our interactions with our environment are a recurring preoccupation.

Simultaneously magicians conjuring an experience and scientists extending their capacity to perceive, interpret and intercept the world, Skoltz.Kolgen's experiments are as much observations and investigations as they are expressions of experience. Like alchemists they strive to transmute and transcend the matter of life, to transform the mundane into precious material. Their work evokes a sense of wonder, a curiosity that reaches beyond the ordinary to grasp the sublime. Yet the tone is subtle and inquisitive rather than heroic and conquering, a search for the secrets to being human, how to live in more expansively in this world rather than transcend it. The concerns and techniques explored and expanded upon address some of the most poignant questions of our time about our relationships to our biological selves and technologically permitted post-human possibilities. Though their art is highly technological and possesses a pristine sheen that is unnatural in its luminosity, it is also a poetic and hermetic exploration of a very ancient and very human scape. Fusing the romantic with the clinical, the mystical with the profane, Skoltz.Kolgen mingle science with art to probe the paradox of infinity and mortality and to create evocative experiences that reflect the emotional and material complexity of our world back to us. It appears that the object is always the experience in the work of Skoltz.Kolgen.