

MICROCOSMOS

Digital performance for live ambient music

Xavier Prevot

Application for the Lunga festival 2024



Microcosmos performance at Matter's Whisper exhibition
with Yuri Urano ~ @yullippe. Daigo-Ji temple. Kyoto 2023

Microcosmos is a live video creation designed to accompany performances of ambient electronic music. The work takes the form of a visual composition, weaving in real time between macroscopic video capture of mineral or vegetal objects and music-influenced generative imagery. The work gradually transforms into a dive into the minuscule, becoming evolving cartographies.

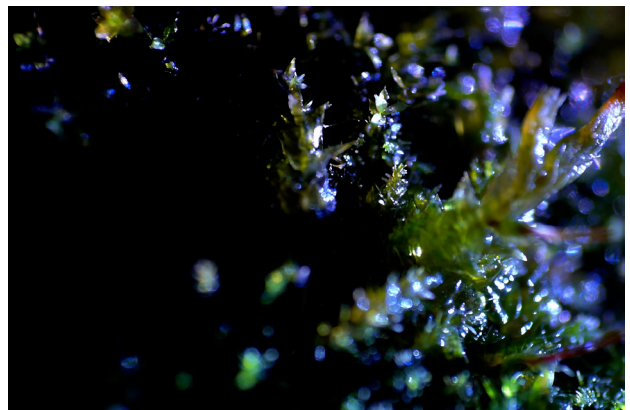
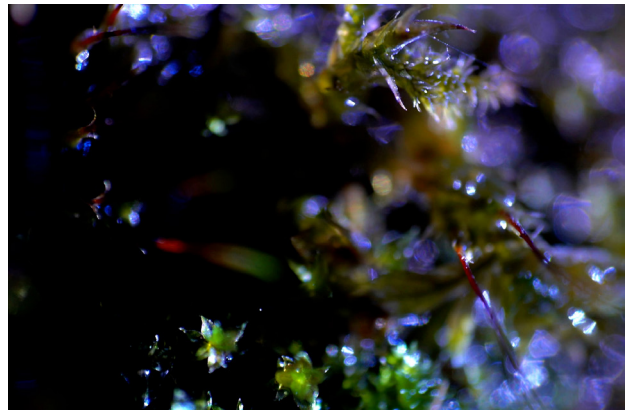


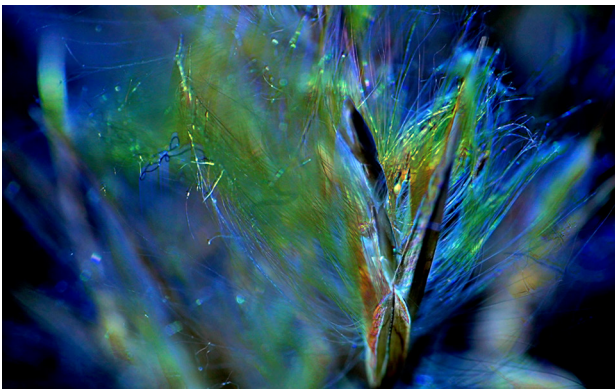
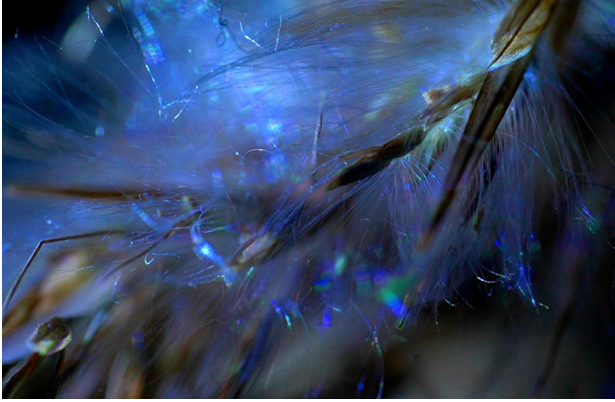
Vision of a hidden forest.
Moss-covered pebble filmed
during performance

About Microcosmos

At the heart of the performance is an installation in which fragments of plants, mushrooms or minerals are filmed in real time, animated by rotating mobile trays. These fragments become successive image sources, interchanged on their supports by the artist following the evolution of the music. The images captured by this system are then linked to a generative digital process modulated in real time in response to variations of the music and by various control interfaces.

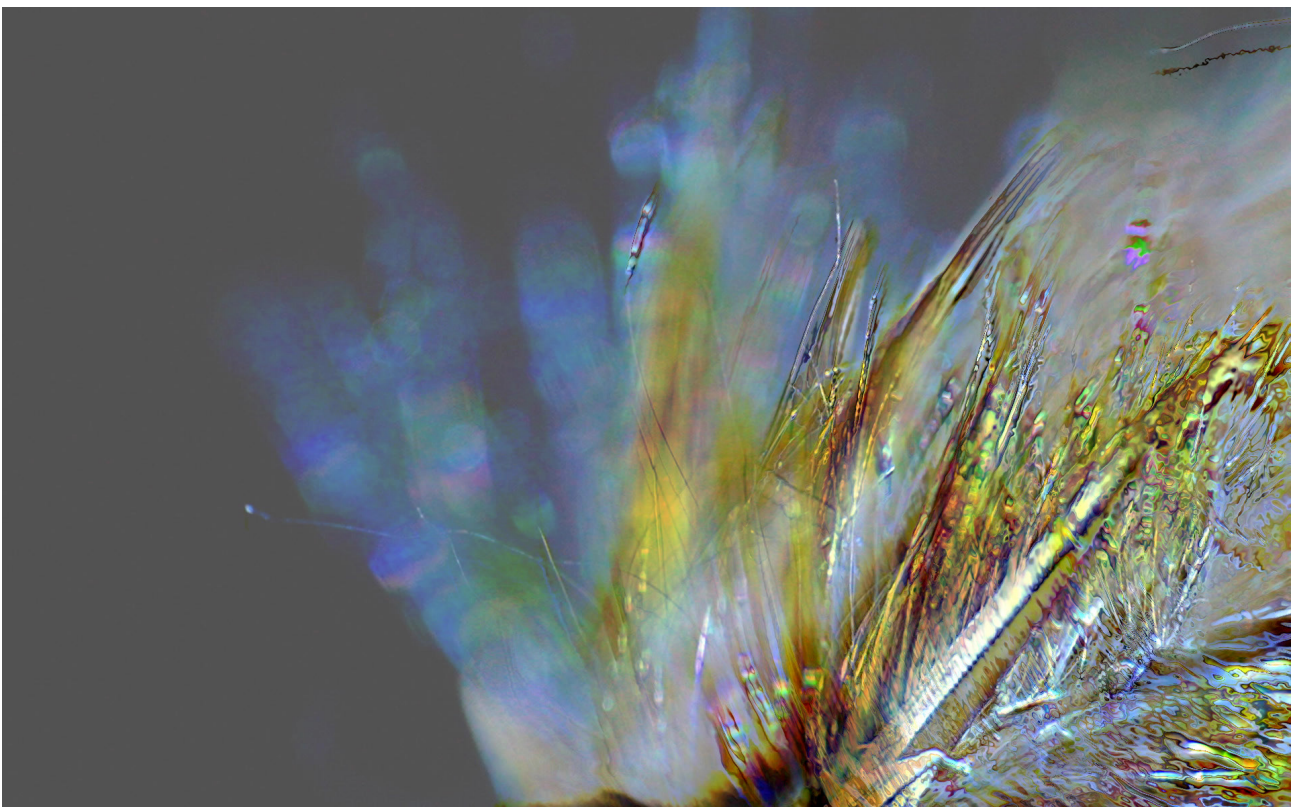
The composition is designed to be displayed on one or more video projection supports during the musical performance. The macroscopic scale defines a type of observation at the very limit of the human gaze, often carried out with the aid of a lens. Attempting to position ourselves at the boundary between the visible and the imperceptible, at the beginning of the microscopic field, allows the fragments filmed to appear on a scale of detail inaccessible to the eye. If the object remains the same, it is our gaze that opens up to a hidden unknown.



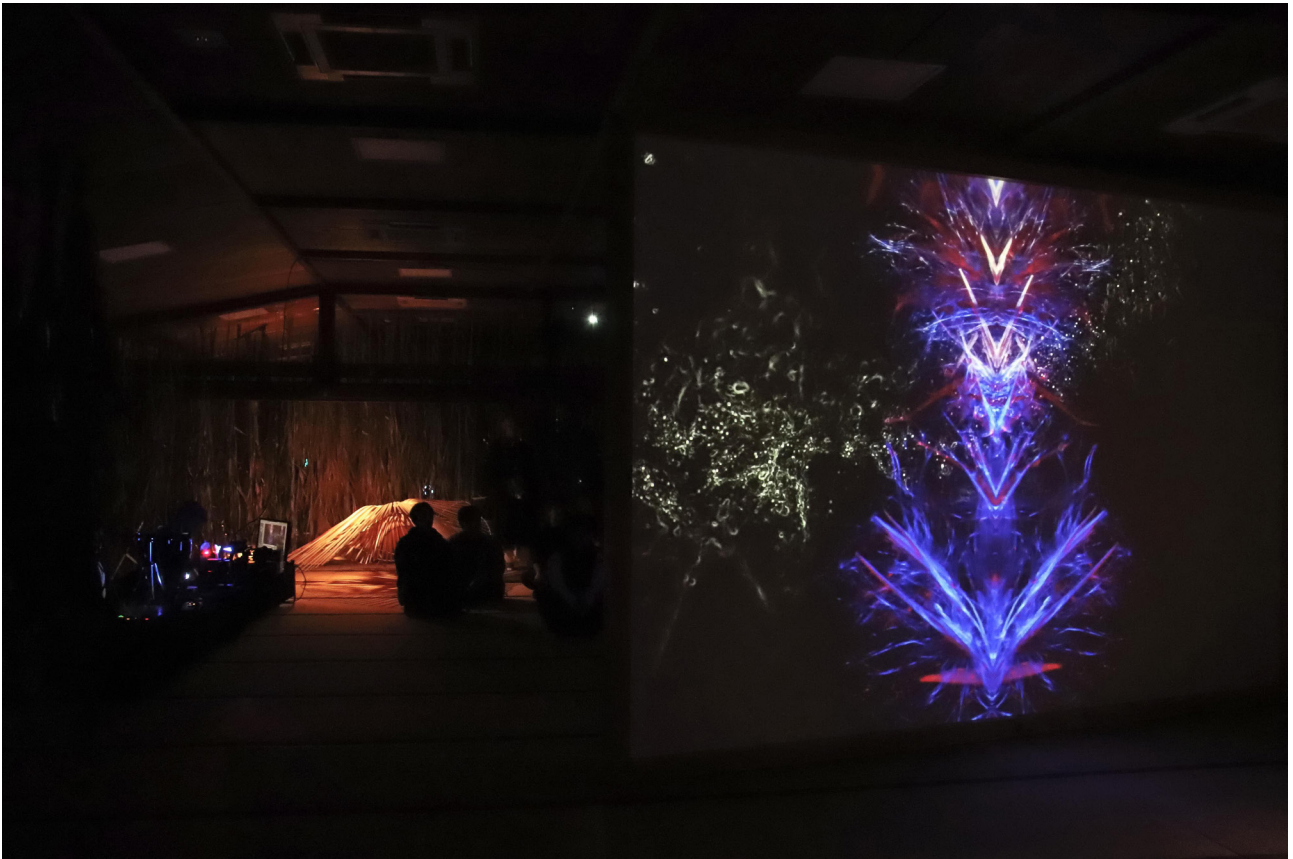


Following this approach, the generative image attempts to make the composition oscillate on the border of the indefinable. Interacting with the music via signal acquisition, and influenced in real time by the performer via various control interfaces, the generative processes used here transform video into infinitely alterable material. The result is an ever-changing image that ebbs and flows between naturalistic retranscription and the emergence of abstract cartographies. In this way, the generative image tends to bring performance closer to living form, questioning the presumed separation between technical and organic.

Through this project, a protean work is formed, constantly changing and adaptable in relation to the place where it is deployed, by collecting debris or plant samples from surrounding nature. The scale required enables us to take very small samples with minimal disruption to the environment. The technical aspects of Microcosmos were also designed to be consistent with the concept, giving priority to the repurposing and recycling of devices.



Generative visual process from filmed reed spikelets



Microcosmos performance at Matter's Whisper exhibition. Daigo-Ji temple. Kyoto 2023

Origins

Microcosmos was created during a residency at the Daigo-Ji Buddhist temple of Kyoto in 2023 as part of the Matter's Whisper exhibition project. Conceived as part of a collaboration with musician Yuri Urano, designer Nina Fradet and glass artist Keiji Okushima, the work was translated into several performances at the heart of the exhibition's immersive itinerary.

It is by experiencing the beauty of the living world that we feel the desire to protect it. The Microcosmos project stems from this idea of using the digital arts to establish a sensitive link between the observer and the living world. This idea is at the root of

the attempt to create a contemplative journey through images of plants and ambient music. The choice of the video image to serve this purpose stems from its ability to give contours to the invisible, to make the viewer glimpse the complexity of minute forms as an infinity in its own right.

Inspired by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's thinking on *latent commons* as zones of mutualistic entanglement in environments disturbed by human activity, Microcosmos is a project of work as an experiment in reconciling the organic and the technical.



Vjing performance at Marcel Reste Assis ambient techno live event with ~ @juste.s.uz
La Taquinerie collective. Paris 2023

Biography

As a video maker and visual artist, Xavier is engaged in polymorphous research into the video image as an object that amplifies reality. Today, he is conducting joint research into digital image generation processes and video as a tool for viewing the infinitesimal.

After studying applied arts and architecture at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Grenoble, Xavier went on to study directing at the Factory center, followed by digital arts training at La Filière CFPTS.

Between 2015 and 2018, he wrote and designed the sets for several plays, including *Le Sommeil des machines*, during a residency at the Lamartine industrial wasteland. Today, he participates in various theater directing projects as a video artist, and in December 2023 completed a three-month residency for the Matter's Whisper project, an exhibition combining craft and digital arts at the Daigo-Ji Temple in Kyoto, with the support of the Franco-Japanese Sasakawa Foundation and the French Institute of Kansai.



Staging

Interaction with music is at the heart of Microcosmos. So, if the Lunga's programming allows for a meeting between the project and the performance of a musician also interested in this collaboration, it would be preferable to exchange ideas beforehand in order to imagine together how best to bring together the visual themes of the project and the music. It is also important to be able to discuss the technical aspects of capturing the live audio signal needed to set the parameters of the project's audio-reactive digital elements (see technical rider).

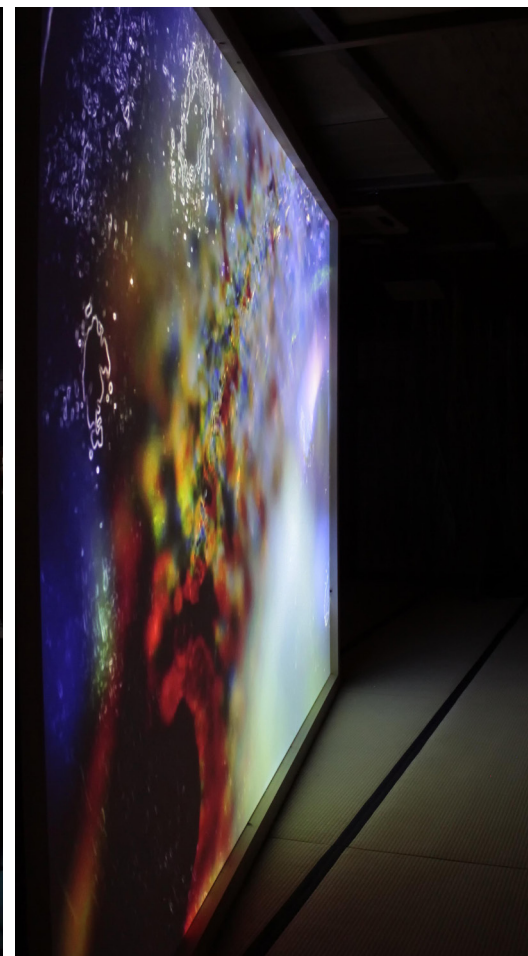
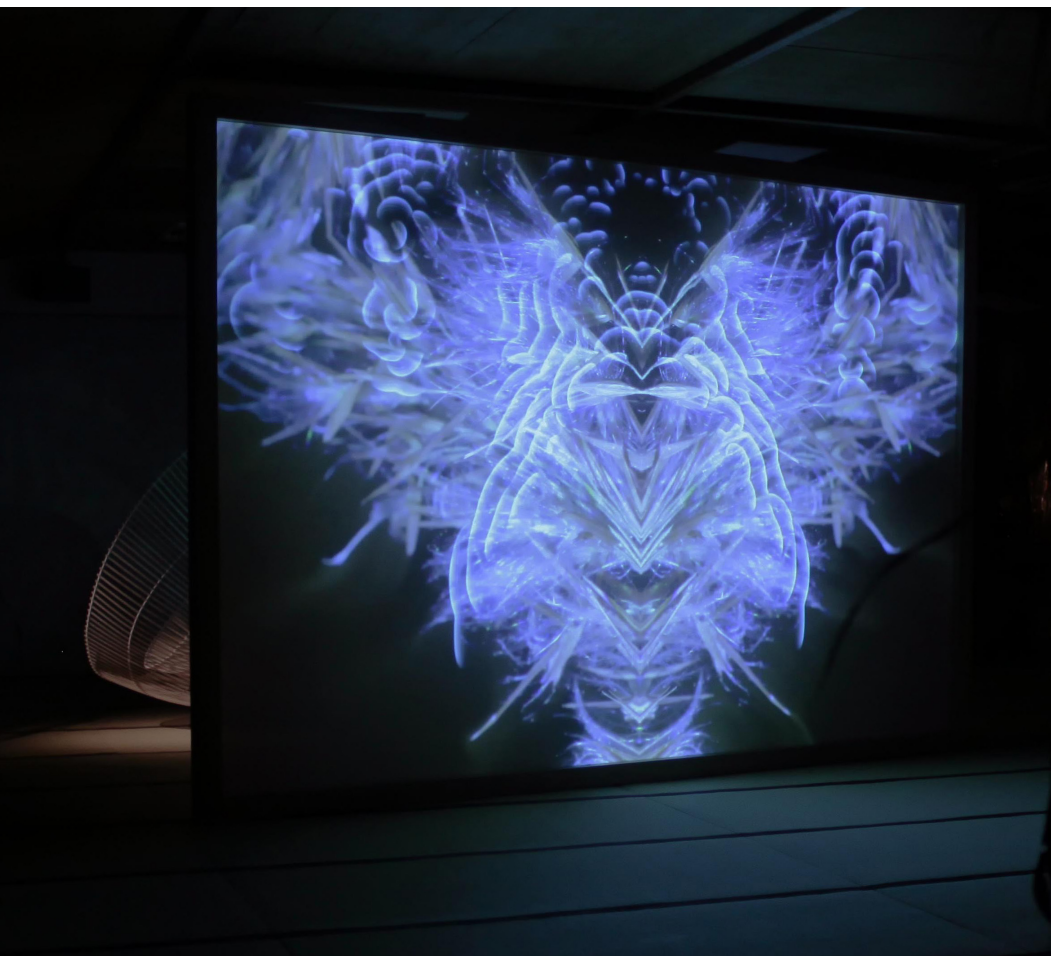
Video projection can be carried out on one or several surfaces distributed throughout the space. A video mapping projection is also conceivable if an upstream discussion can be held to adapt the project. The performance can be adapted to any type of projection surface, whether murals or

temporary, set up for the performance.

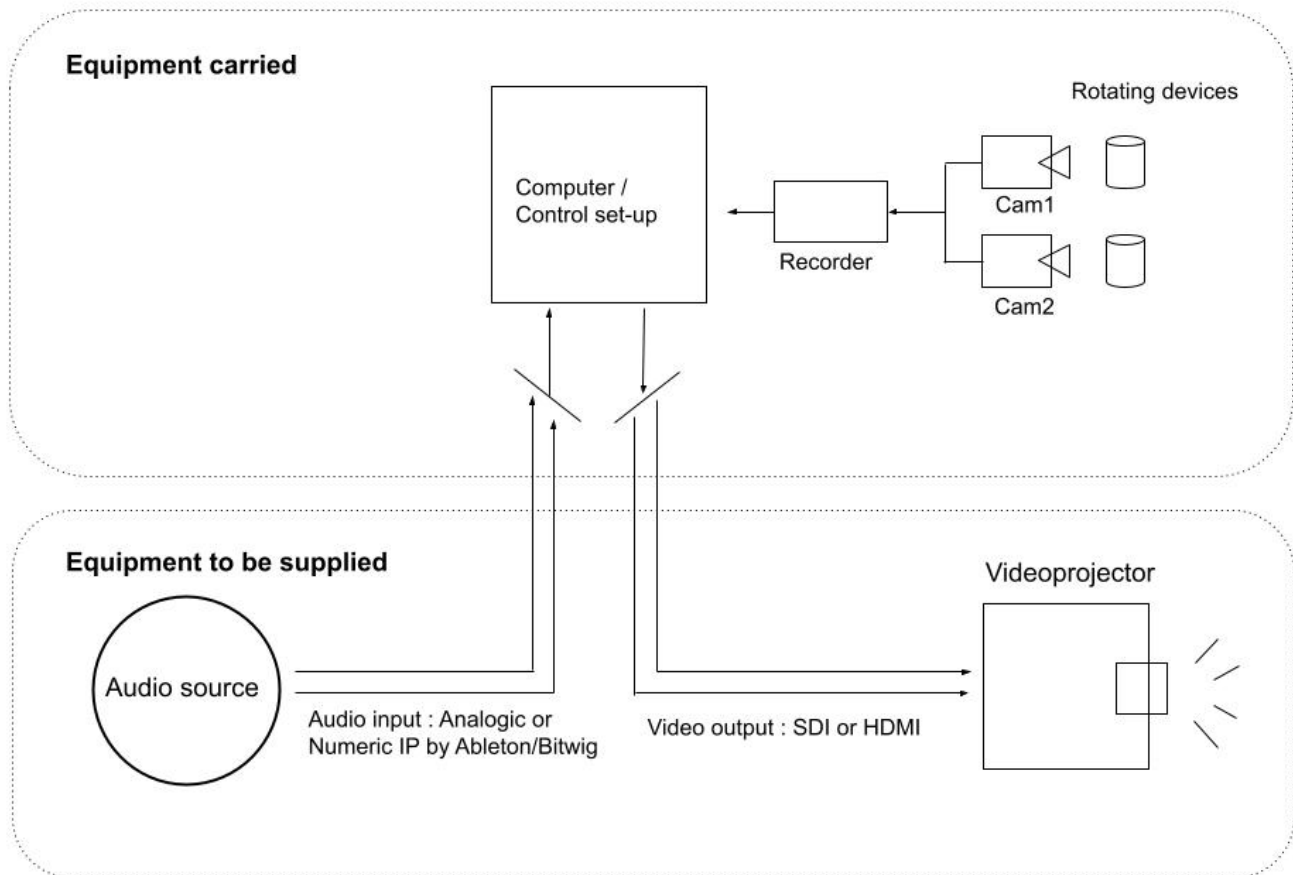
One advantage would be to create a spatial proximity between the projection surface and the musician, to enhance the relationship between the two parts of the performance.

Broadcasting by projection requires that the performance take place at night or indoors, with a part of the natural light sources shut off. Apart from this aspect, the staging of Microcosmos is designed to be as versatile as possible depending on the context of the performance, and to adapt to pre-existing scenographies.

The work attempts to create a contemplative experience by allowing those present to let their sensations of being carried away by the music and image. An ideal setting would allow guests to sit or lie on the floor in comfort, in a space away from the strolling zones.



Technical rider



Audio capture

- If possible, connection to computer as audio source via TCP/IP network connection. Interface required: Ableton Live 9.7.2 and up or Bitwig Studio 5.0.10 and up

(or)

- Audio input via analog signal (Mini-Jack or XLR)

Video broadcast

- Access to a video projector (5000 lumens min)

- SDI connection


(or)

- HDMI connection of sufficient length

- Suitable projection surface

Other

- Electricity
- A 1x2m work surface.



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