Sachie Kobayashi
Composer



小林祥恵



Sachie Kobayashi 小林祥恵

Composer, Creator

Sachie Kobayashi (b. 1990) is a Japanese composer and media artist active between Europe and Asia. Her work spans instrumental and orchestral writing, electronics, voice, video and interactive systems, and centres on trans-instrumentalism: a practice in which sound, language, image, the body and technology transform one another. The series began with Day 0 / Trans-Instrumentalism (2022), developed during the IRCAM Cursus. It continued with the VR work RêVeRie (2025), presented with Ensemble Contrechamps at the Geneva International Film Festival, and most recently with Babel / Trans-Instrumentalism (2026, IRCAM Forum Workshops Tokyo), an installation that treats machine listening, mistranslation and synthetic speech as compositional material.

Her music has been performed by Klangforum Wien, Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Proton Bern, mdi ensemble, Ensemble Reconcil and percussion CYTi, among others. Distinctions include first prize at the impuls International Composition Competition (Graz, 2023), selection for Protonwerk No. 11 (2022), the Swiss shortlist for the ISCM World Music Days (2021) and a Special Mention at Ars Electronica Forum Wallis (2020). Her work has been supported by the Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship, the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan, the Nomura Foundation and the City of Geneva.

Kobayashi holds a BA in composition from Tokyo University of the Arts and MA degrees in composition (2020) and music theory education (2023) from the Haute école de musique de Genève, where she studied with Michael Jarrell, Luis Naón and Gilbert Nouno. She completed the IRCAM Cursus in composition and computer music (2021–22) under Pierre Jodlowski. She is the founder of Studio Cucurbits., a studio working across disciplines through technology and music.

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Education
Prizes, Selections, Scholarships



IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique)

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Education


Protonwerk no.11、Bern,

2023

Master of Arts - Composition and Music Theory Education

Haute école de musique de Genève

Conseil d’État prize, Leenaards/HEM Springboard

2020

Master of Arts - Composition instrumentale

Haute école de musique de Genève

2018

Bachelor of Arts - Composition

Tokyo University of the Arts

Acanthus award, director of Taito Ward award

2013

Bachelor of Arts - Cultural and Creative Studies

Aoyama Gakuin University

Extra

2022

Cursus de composition et d'informatique musicale

IRCAM (Institut de recherche et coordination acoustique/musique)

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Prizes, Selections, Scholarships


"Shifting" with Klangforum Wien, Vienna, Austria

2024

- Semaine de la Résidence at T2G Théâtre de Gennevilliers (France)
- Semaine de la Résidence at La Ménagerie de Verre (France)
- Résidence d'essaie at Le CENTQUATRE-PARIS (France)

2023

- Conseil d'État prize、Leenaards/HEM Springboard prize
- Winner of impuls. International Composition Competition at impuls Festival 2023, Graz, Austria

2022

- Protonwerk No.11, Ensemble Proton Bern, Switzerland

2021

- Artist Grant (2021-2023) Nomura Foundation, Japan
- Cité international des Arts Paris by Artist Grant by City of Geneva and Simon I. Patiño Foundation, Geneva, Switzerland
- Scholarship (2021) Kakehashi Foundation, Japan
- Finalist for Swiss Section (2021) International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) World Music Days, Switzerland

2020

- Scholarship Fondation Hans Wilsdorf (2020), Switzerland

Before 2020

- Special Mention Selection for the Forum Wallis at Ars Electronica 2020 for acousmatic works, Switzerland
- Artist Study Grant Swiss Government Excellence Scholarship,
- Artist Grant (2019) Fellowship through the Program for Emerging Artists Abroad, sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan
- Taito City Mayor Award (2018), Japan
- Acanthus Award (2018), Japan

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Works



« Day 1 - Trans-Instrumentalism » IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique)

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Creation series

TRANS-
INSTRUMENTALISM

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Interactive audiovisual installation

Babel - Trans-Instrumentalism (2026)

Presented at IRCAM Forum @Tokyo 2026

Tokyo, Japan — 22 November 2026

For the visitor's voice, three machine listeners, four screens

Concept, music, visual: Sachie Kobayashi
Technology collaborator: Frederik Bous
Max 9 / Jitter (GLSL), local speech recognition and text-to-speech

IRCAM Forum · Temple University Japan Campus · studio cucurbits. · YAMAHA · Focusrite

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Babel – Trans-Instrumentalism is an interactive audiovisual installation in which the visitor's voice becomes the instrument. A sentence spoken once into a single microphone is passed to three machine listeners, which hear it only as sound, mishear it in their own languages and answer with synthetic voices through four speakers. On four small screens, faces press against a wet, glassy membrane and articulate every phoneme of these voices, while the misheard words drift across the surface.

The work continues the Trans-Instrumentalism series, shifting its focus from instrumental gesture to speech. Rather than solving the language barrier through perfect translation, Babel lets meaning circulate between body, microphone, machine listening and synthetic voice, and lingers on what remains when words are displaced: accent, misrecognition, delay and silence.

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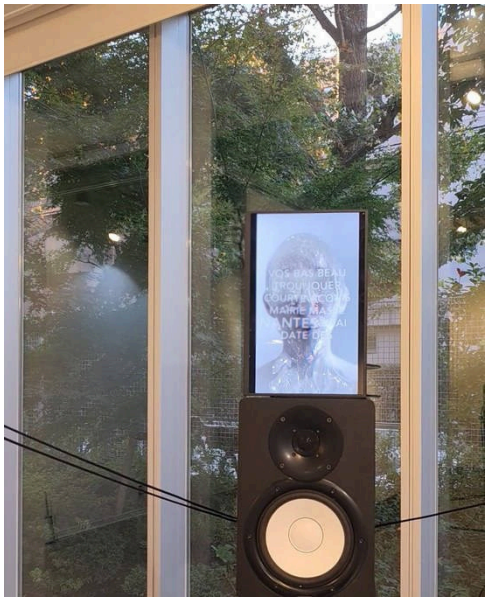



The visitor speaks once. The recording is heard by three machine listeners as a stream of phonemes only; each rebuilds it into words of its own language and answers with its own synthetic voice. The listeners enter one after another, so that a single sentence returns as a chain of mishearings — a small tower of Babel built from one person's words.

Each voice has its own screen. Lips, membrane, refraction and light are computed in real time in Max 9 / Jitter with GLSL shaders, driven by the phoneme timings taken directly from the speech synthesiser. Each phoneme is mapped to a viseme and to seven articulatory parameters — aperture, width, rounding, protrusion, lip tension, asymmetry and contact pressure — with coarticulation, bilabial closure and residual tremor, so that the mouths behave like bodies rather than icons.

Presented at IRCAM Forum @Tokyo 2026 with four vertical screens, four speakers and one microphone; speech recognition and voice synthesis run locally on a single computer.

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Screen sequence
From water to face to misheard words — one screen over about five seconds

A face surfaces through a wet, glassy membrane as the synthetic voice begins, and the words a listener believes they heard are written across it — here, “though buy boat / lose wake own / turkey Mary / nurse nah tour / aid hurt day”. Frames taken from the documentation video of the installation at IRCAM Forum @Tokyo 2026.

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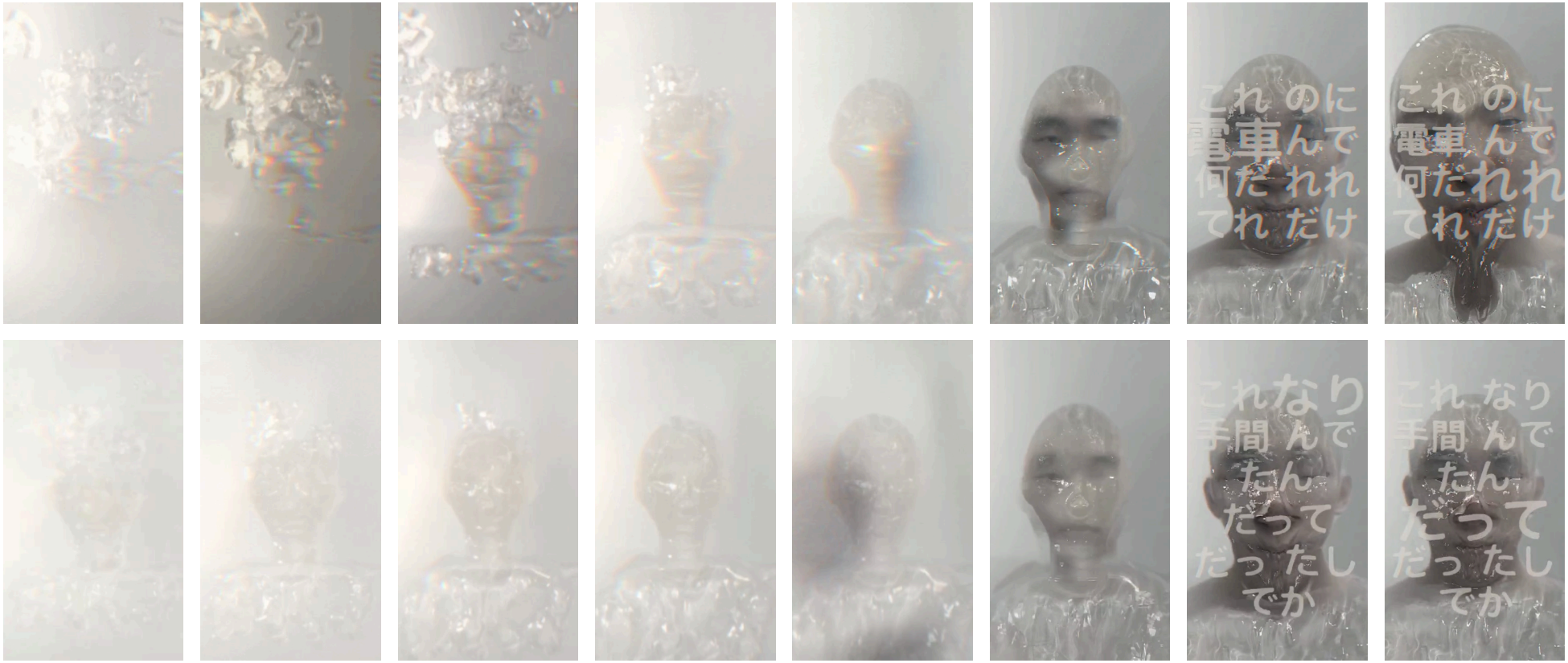

Frames from the installation

Recorded from the patch on 21 November 2026 — two of the screens, each from glass letters to a speaking face under misheard Japanese

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VR and Live music

RêVeRie - Trans-Instrumentalism (2025)

Commissioned by Ensemble Contrechamps
In collaboration with the GIFF (Geneva International Film Festival)
Program: *Locus Solus* – GIFF × Ensemble Contrechamps

Music: Sachie Kobayashi
3D, VR, animation: Sachie Kobayashi
Performance: Ensemble Contrechamps

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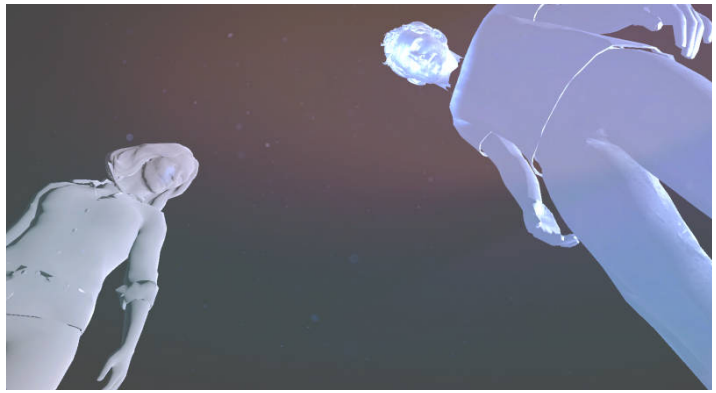

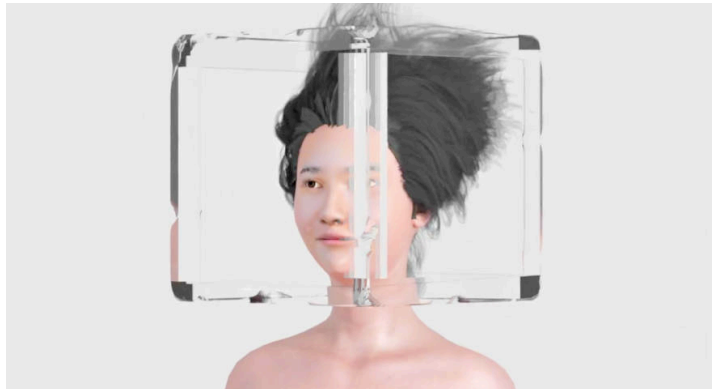

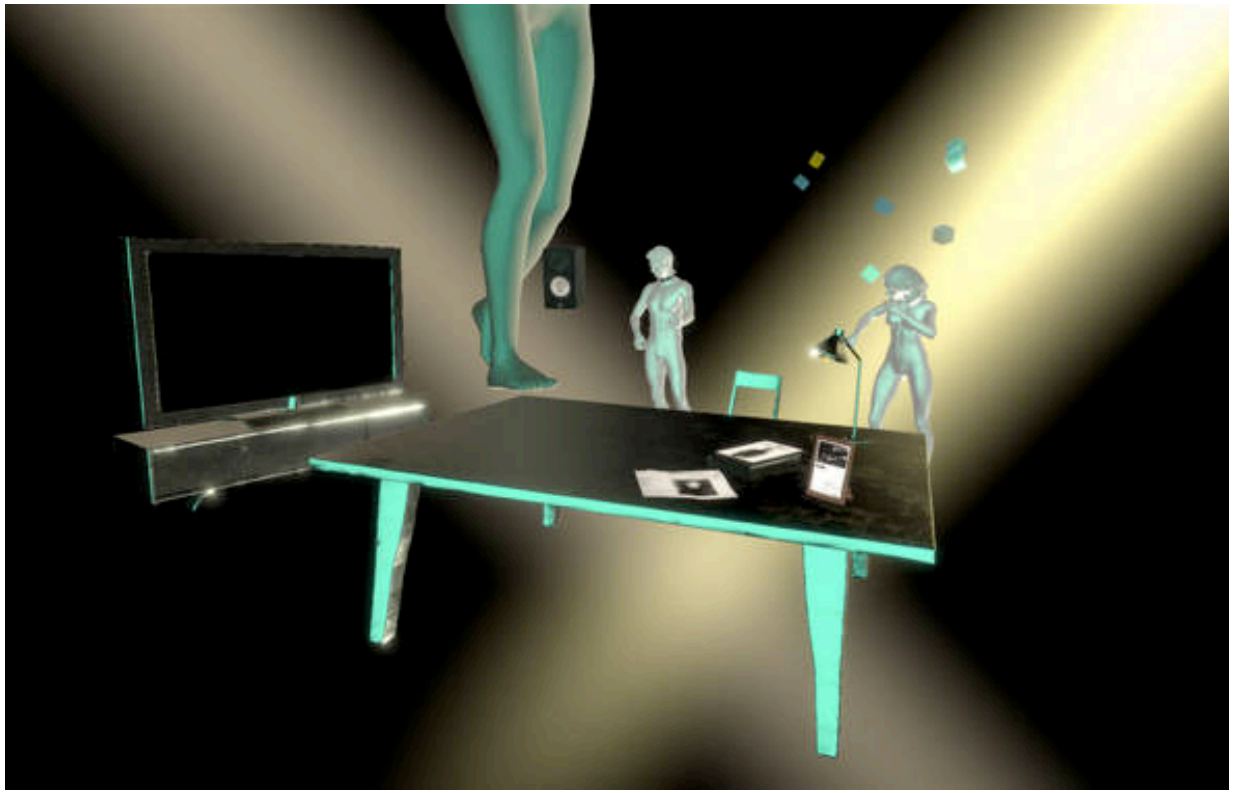

Rêverie expands an ongoing exploration of trans-instrumentalism, examining the fluid continuum between acoustic and digital instruments. Created in collaboration with musicians of Ensemble Contrechamps (CH), the work imagines how instruments might “dream” of one another, allowing timbre to evolve into architecture and gesture to unfold as landscape.

Rêverie opens new possibilities for understanding sound as spatial form and space as musical material. Within virtual and mixed-reality environments, body, image, and sound interact as an integrated field of creation. This multidimensional framework moves beyond technical innovation, cultivating an immersive, poetic, and contemplative experience a kind of rêverie in which musical creation becomes simultaneously spatial, sensorial, and transformative.

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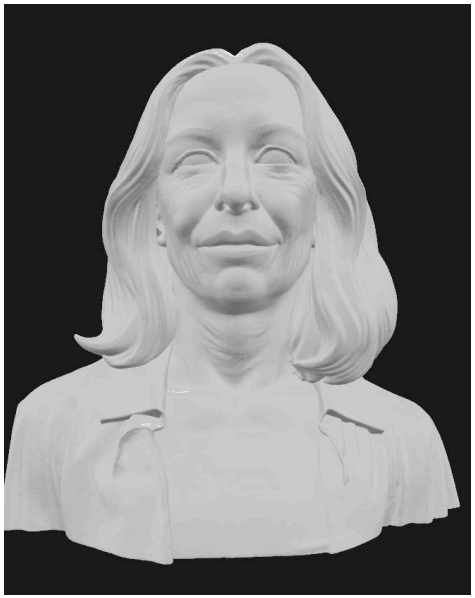

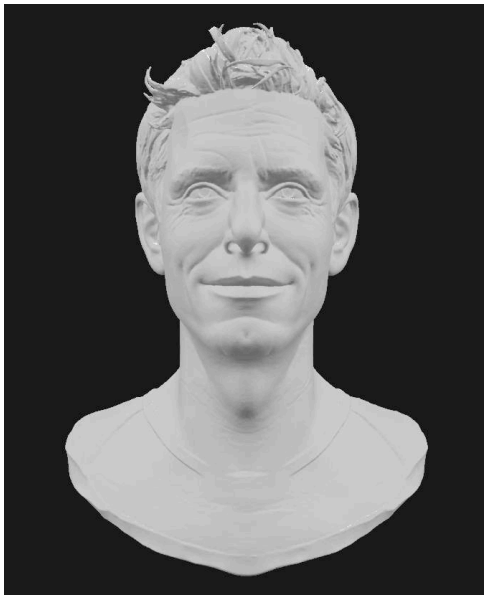

The piece explores the extension of reality into virtual reality, blurring the boundaries between two worlds or two bodies since instruments can be understood as both body and music. An AI-generated 3D model exists in virtual space while live musicians perform in front of the audience, with music serving as the medium that connects and shares both realities continuously. Mixed-reality allow acoustic and digital, physical and virtual, to merge seamlessly.

In Rêverie, the cube appears as a central visual motif throughout the work. The cube represents the space in which we exist both the physical room and metaphorically the minds of others, society, or even the self. Cubes scatter, bodies are shown trapped within them, and gradually the boundaries dissolve, merging self, others, and society into a unified whole.



All voices in the piece are AI-generated, and the poetic texts are also created by AI. The world presented on stage may be seen as crafted by the composer, a kind of godlike presence, or as a manifestation of her dream. The butterfly appearing at the beginning evokes the butterfly effect and alludes to the dream of the butterfly, bridging notions of transformation and impermanence.

The work also explores the fusion of Eastern and Western perspectives on identity, creating a space where cultural and philosophical ideas intersect with sound, image, and virtual reality. Through these layered visual and sonic metaphors, Rêverie invites the audience into a contemplative, immersive, and transformative experience.

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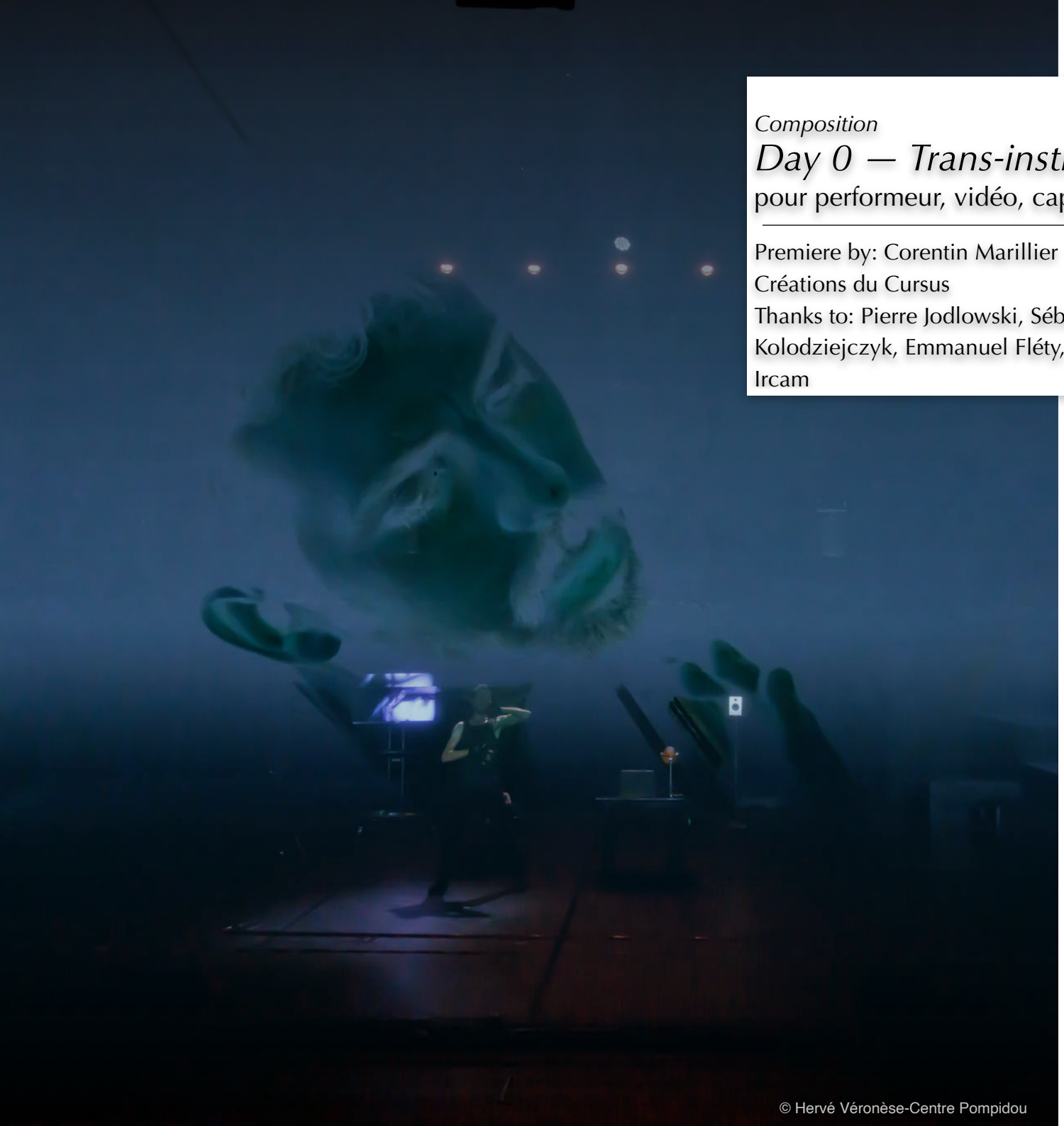

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Composition

Day 0 — Trans-instrumentalism (2022)

pour performeur, vidéo, capture de mouvement et électronique

Premiere by: Corentin Marillier
Créations du Cursus
Thanks to: Pierre Jodlowski, Sébastien Naves, Corentin Marillier, Kaya Kolodziejczyk, Emmanuel Fléty, Frederik Bous and Pedagogical team at Ircam

This piece was composed as the final project of Cursus Program on Composition and Computer Music (Cursus) at IRCAM, the French National Institute (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique).
The project utilized the R-Iot device, an IRCAM-developed wifi-connected motion sensor capable of measuring acceleration, gyroscope, and tilt angle.
The device controls the sound synthesis through patches programmed in Max for Live within Ableton Live, and also controls the brightness and color of the connected LED light bows (archet lumineux,).
Trans-Instrumentalism was then presented in December 2023 at Studio 5 in IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique), the French National Institute of Acoustic Music, as a sequel to Day 0 "Day 1" prototype was presented.

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Instrumental Composition

(With/Without Electronics)

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This work was commissioned by:
Garrett Mendelow
Andrew Naughton
Vassilena Serafimova
Chris Sies
Megan Campbell
Ksenija Komljenović
Danielle Moreau
David Cariano Timme
Alex Petcu
Christian Swafford
Michael Ptacin
Elias Linus Gustavsson
Isaac Pyatt
Yu-Chen Hsiao
Nikolai Ivanov
Jacob Hargrove
Renee Kuczeski
Jonathan Da Silva
Nathan Elliot Siegel



This piece was created with a focus on the physicality of the performers and exploring new possibilities in multi-percussion. At times, the marimba imitates the human voice, blurring the line between performer and listener through a hallucinatory narrative. This piece was premiered online on March 10th, 2025 by Garrett Mendelow and premiered in France on March 15th, 2025 by Vassilena Serafimova.

Duration: 10 mins.

Composition

i.p.s.e.i.t.y. (2025)

For multi-percussion and electronics

Premiere by: Garrett Mendelow (online), Vassilena Serafimova(France)

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Composition

Shifting (2022)

For 11 musicians

Premiere by: Klangforum Wien, Cond.: Johannes Kalitzke
Helmut List Halle, Graz, Austria
www.impuls.cc

Duration: 11 mins.
1 fl. /1 cl. + bass cl. /1 hp. / 1 pf. / 2 perc. / 2 vn. / 1 va. / 1 vc. / 1 cb.

My piece is a textural work that explores the use of smaller dynamics to bring out the maximum possible sound of the instrument. The composition was inspired by my previous work, "Time Study in P", which was composed for a conducting class at the Haute école de musique de Genève. In this piece, certain pitches were derived from the spectral analysis and solution of tam-tam sounds using Orchidea.

In my new piece, I aim to synthesise new sounds and construct a "noise" sound as a novel compositional component. I will explore the repetition of textures and how changes in our listening can arise due to these changes. Ultimately, my goal is to create a work that challenges the listener's perception of sound and encourages them to engage with it in a new way. The concert was broadcast on the radio by the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF).











Composition

I haven't known you yet (2020)

pour orchestre et électronique

Premiere by: Orchestre de HEM Cond.: Pierre Bleuse
Studio Ernest-Ansermet Geneva, Switzerland

Duration: 15 mins.

My second orchestral work. The work was created as a final piece for the Haute école de musique de Genève's master's degree in composition. The music is based on the motif of "cry" and "breathing", with orchestral support by Orchidea. Starting from the idea that an orchestra could be regarded as an organism a living being I drew inspiration from Jonathan Harvey's *Speakings*, which later led me toward the concept of trans-instrumentalism.

Composition with program *Orchidea*, Computer aided Orchestration (IRCAM and HEM)

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Composition

...Do you want to play the piano? (2022)

pour piano et électronique

Premiere by: Hristeya Markova
Salle de l'Institut & Théâtre d'Orléans Orléans, France

Duration: 6 mins.

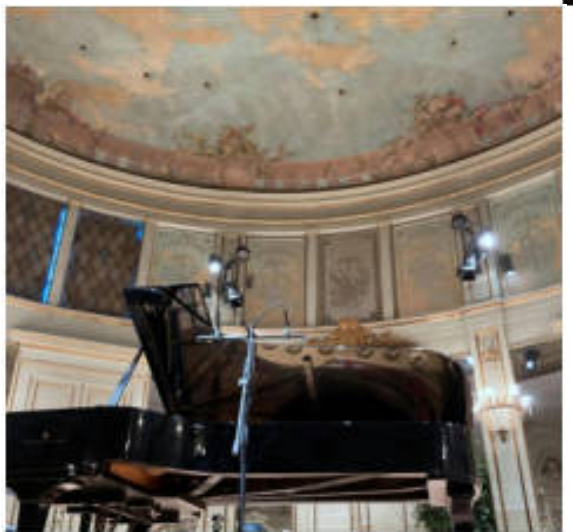
1 pf. / electronics (fixed media, 2ch)

This piece was commissioned by pianist Hristeya Markova as a premiere piece for the 15th Concours international de piano d'Orléans (International Piano Competition of Orléans). It was written as a piece for piano and 2-channel electronic sounds. The concept of the piece was "the piano speaks" and it is a superb piece of art.

The piece is inspired by Austrian composer Peter Ablinger's "Talking Piano (DEUS CANTANDO)" using Max/MSP programs, the concept of converting human voices from MIDI data to musical notation and daring a real pianist to play the "echo" of the electronic sound voices.







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Composition

être (2022)

pour clarinet d'amore et 7 musiciens

Premiere by: Ensemble Proton Bern
Cond.: Aaron Cassidy
Dampfzentrale Bern, Switzerland
Dedicated to: Richard Haynes

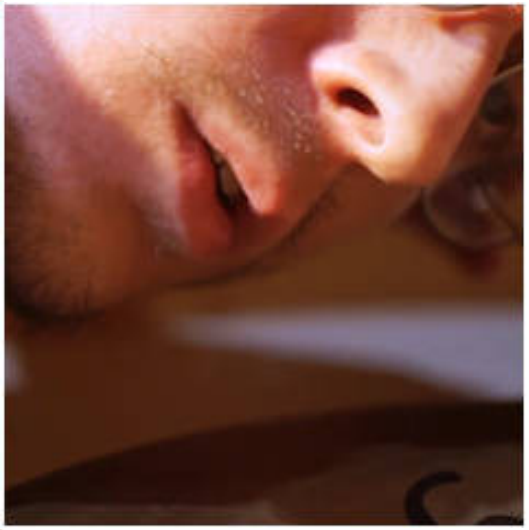
Duration: 12 mins.
1 fl. / 1 cl. d'amore / 1 ob. / 1 fg. / 1 hp. / 1 pf. / 1 vn. / 1 vc.

This piece was performed in Bern, Switzerland, under the direction of Aaron Cassidy, as the selected composer for the open call Protonwerk no. 11 by Ensemble Proton Bern, a professional contemporary music ensemble in Bern, Switzerland.
Dedicated to Richard Haynes, a solo clarinet d'amore player.











This piece was performed at the Swiss Chamber Music Festival 2019 by Percussion CYTi, the Swiss percussion duo consisting of Chiao-Yuan Chang and Till Lingenberg.

The work explores effective writing for a minimal instrumentation, deliberately avoiding reliance on large ensembles. It is composed through “gestures”: speaking to the instruments, listening to them, and gently stroking them. By treating these three actions as core compositional elements, the piece offers the audience a performance in which the physical and musical dimensions are strongly interwoven.

Duration: 6 mins.

Composition

Don't Hit Me (2019)

For 2 percussionists

Premiere by: Duo Percussion CYTi (Chiao-Yuan Chang, Till Lingenberg)

Swiss Chamber Music Festival 2019 (Switzerland)

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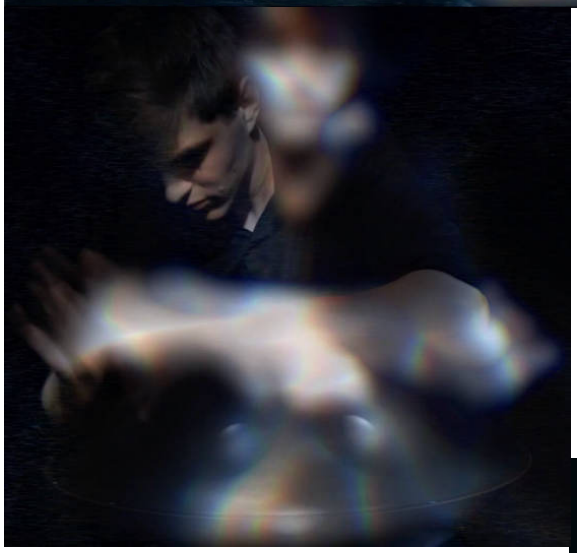
Composition

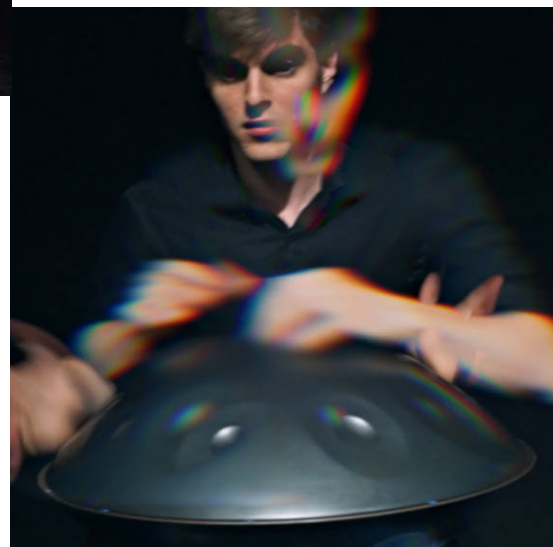
O.V.N.I. (2021)

For Handpan and Electronics

Premiere by: Michaël Tissier
Movie and music: Sachie Kobayashi
Haute école de musique de Genève (Switzerland)







Duration: 11 minutes
Instrumentation: Handpan, fixed media (2-channel)

This piece, commissioned by Michaël Tissier and premiered at the Haute école de musique de Genève, is an experimental work for handpan created at a time when only a few makers were producing the instrument. The composition grew out of numerous meetings with the performer, during which new playing techniques were explored and refined. The performance incorporates fixed media and is realized using Ableton Live, Reaper, and click-track synchronization.

Supported by AVL Cultural Foundation

Video: Sachie Kobayashi — Front Row Seat

Promotion

nominees of the international impuls Composition Competition



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Collaboration

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Composition

Poetry is whats gets lost in translation (2023)

For video installation



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Composition

Poetry is whats gets lost in translation (2023)

For video installation

Collaboration with: IRCAM, École des Beaux-Arts, ENSBA
Lucie Wahl, Margot Bernard, Clara Éon
Chapelle des Petits-Augustins ENSBA, Paris, France

A polyphony of songs was designed to envelop the space through 6 speakers installed in the church, collaborated with a video installation by Lucie Wahl and Clara Éon. Bernard's small book of poems, which contains all the songs recorded, is a beautiful work of art that speaks of identity, recalled in different languages and across people's memories.

Duration: 12 mins.

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Composition sonore for theatre

Poupée N. (2024)

45 mins.

Writing, direction, performance: Grace Seri.
Lighting design: Cristobal Castillo-Mora
Sound composition: Sachie Kobayashi
Video creation: Steven Guermyet
External perspectives: Dana Fiaque, Lucie Gallo.
Filmed stage: Mathieu Kauffmann.
Production: Anna Ladeira - Le Voisin

Production: Cie portrait fractales and Le Voisin
Co-production: Arsenic - Center for Contemporary Stage Art, Lausanne. Support: Point Éphémère, Lafayette Anticipation Foundation Galeries Lafayette, T2G Théâtre de Gennevilliers

In a “room of one's own” haunted by symbolic objects, a young girl becomes a doll when she hears voices coming through her: Poupée N., N de négresse. Lanieka, the porcelain dog, the purple corded telephone and posters by May Ayim, Toni Morrison, Soraya Bonelli and Nina Simone, to name but a few, set the reminiscent scene and accompany Poupée N. on her memorial journeys. In the form of a collage as crazy as it is experimental, Grace Seri conjures up a melting pot of images and memories fracturing her thoughts, in the service of a poetic self-fiction between Saint-Louis, the Ile de Goré and the quays of the Garonne in Bordeaux. Like a ritual of reconciliation, she imagines in this tale reviving the dead beings who would rise to the surface of the Atlantic waters, those thrown overboard during a slave ship crossing. Poupée N. is not afraid of the monstrous, flirting with the spiritual and the hidden zones of the unconscious on the one hand, and the morbidly mournful burlesque on the other. In the intimacy of this teenage bedroom, Grace Seri probes the traces left on the present and in the flesh by a dehumanized and violent past.

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Electroacoustic Composition for film

Robin Touchard

The Cosmic Microwaves Background (2024)

Collaboration with: Le Fresnoy – Studio national des arts contemporains / IRCAM, France

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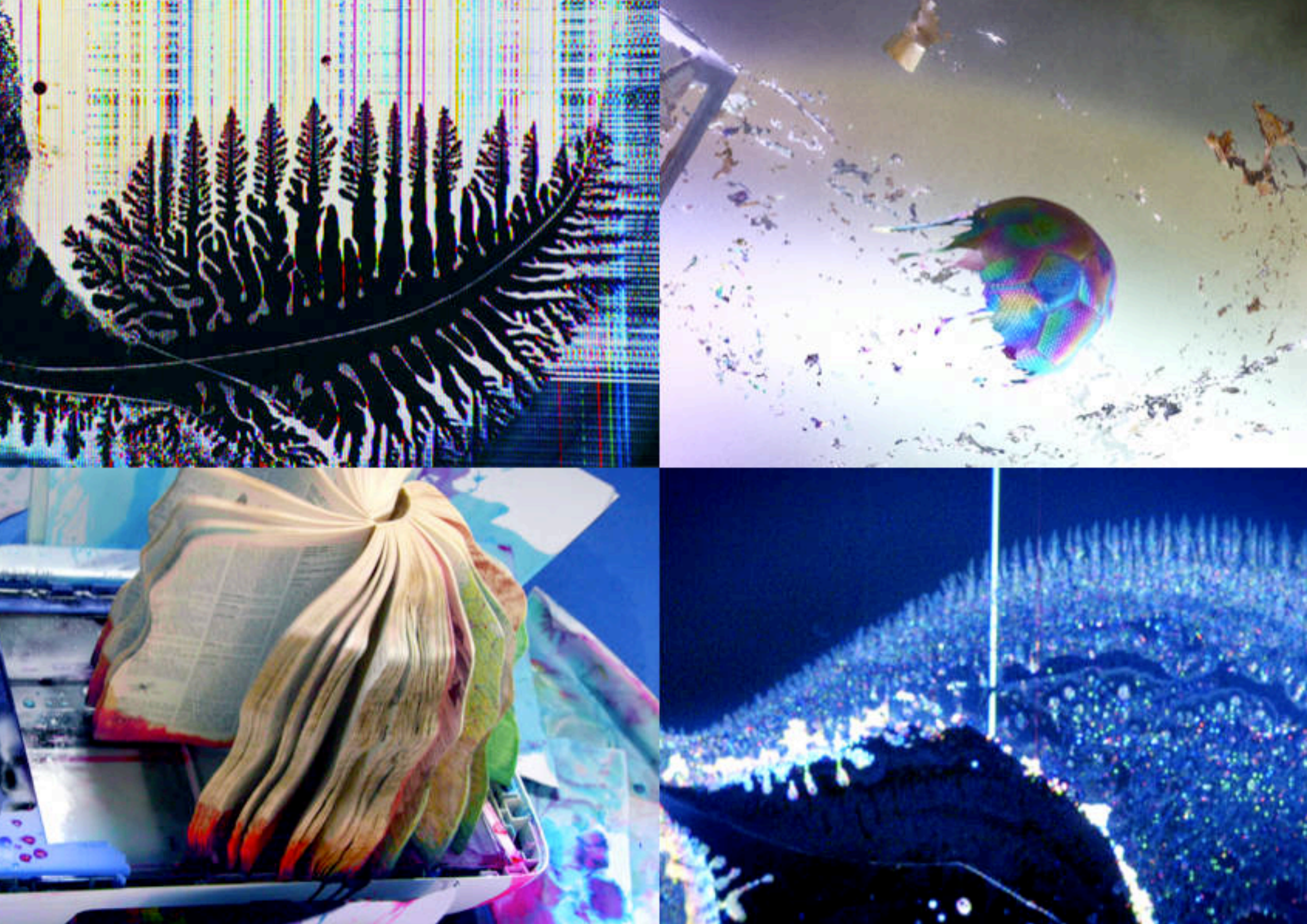

Other works: Collaboration

Sound Design / Composition

Une autre que moi (2024)

Direction: Clara Eon
Script: Clara Eon

Supported by: Fondation Leenaards/HEM, CENQUATRE PARIS, la Ménagerie de Verre dans le cadre du Studiolab, École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris

"Une autre que moi" with Clara Eon, choreographer and performer, a collaboration has been established to explore new paths in the relation of music and performance. This project was supported by La Ménagerie de Verre, CENTQUATRE-PARIS, and the Beaux-Arts, for the year 2023-2024, proposes to explore the complex theme of hysteria through dance, music, and storytelling. The piece follows the character of Emma, 28, diagnosed as hysterical by her doctor, and explores the manifestations of sexist labeling, disrupting Emma's perception of her body and her history. This project, although inspired by historical facts, is not intended to be documentary but is the result of an aesthetic research conducted from a political perspective.



Multimedia work

Jaeduk Kim - Digital Panopticon (2025)

for 3 percussionists, live electronics and multimedia

Composition: Jaeduk Kim
Multimedia: Sachie Kobayashi

The Panopticon, designed by Jeremy Bentham, is a prison structure in which a central observer can watch all prisoners, while the prisoners never know whether they are actually being observed. This uncertainty compels them to regulate themselves, embodying a crucial mechanism of power. Byung-Chul Han extends this idea to the digital age, where surveillance no longer depends on coercion but on voluntary self-exposure, through which individuals actively contribute to their own surveillance. This work, written for three percussionists and four short movements, narratively explores these dimensions. The 2nd movement after the first introducution, depicts participation in surveillance through self-exposure, followed by the relentless pursuit by rulers within the system of control. The final movement portrays the fragmentation of the self, where everything is confined within a dense, multidimensional structure of domination. ()



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Multimedia work

Réalités (2022)

for Xbox Kinect, percussionists, live electronics and multimedia

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Composition: Sachie Kobayashi, Ayaka Fukano
Multimedia: Sachie Kobayashi

Institut Jaques-Dalcroze - ijd

This work was presented as part of the final master's project in the Dalcroze Eurhythmics program at the Haute école de musique de Genève, performed by rhythmist Ayaka Fukano. As an artistic culmination of research into the relationship between the body and music within the Dalcroze Method originally developed by Swiss composer Émile Jaques-Dalcroze the piece integrates movement, sound, and interactive technology. A Kinect sensor generated live visuals in Processing, while the performance featured vibraphone playing augmented with live electronics using Ableton Live and Max for Live.

The second half of the project featured an electroacoustic composition based on the Japanese children's song "Soap Bubbles," created specifically to accompany choreography.



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