

Modern “Sight and Sound”

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Courtesy of Beall Center for Arts

Revealing the possibilities of unique sonic and visual combinations, the Beall Center for Art + Technology at the University of California, Irvine presents a media art exhibition called “Sight & Sound.”

Featuring works by five different artists, the exhibition opened on October 3rd, and shows how art can be influenced by modern technology.

While walking toward the Beall Center, guests start their journey by hearing a female voice singing, “Klage/Lament,” even before

actually entering the center. Lewis DeSoto is an artist who started working with incorporative sound in the 1980s. This time, he created “Klage/Lament” with Erin Neff singing the verses of a German poem called “Magister Ludi.” In an Arabic/Indian style, the song combines the poem with world religion and culture.

“The poem is about wanting to be a rock in the river and never change, but we can’t. So when someone cries out, ‘I wanna live forever; I wanna stay here,’ well, you can’t,” deSoto explained. “There are four voices going at the same time and they are never at the same point. It’s like a river. The melody is always changing.” The artist is transmitting the message that nothing in the world is immutable.

Six chrome-plated steel helmets, Michelle Jaffe’s “Wappen Field,” is a sculpture combined with sound installation, which creates a vivid audio environment.. Guests can actually stand behind the masks, see through them, and hear the sound. The sound could be from a fire scene, or from a daily street scene.

“They are all at the same height, and facing you. I hope people see the collective going on. And I hope that people consider what is common in humanity, as well as all the differences, ” Jaffe said, “and there, at the floor, there are these shadows that look like a logo, which represent something that you don’t know about. And, of course, the idea of armor. It can be the knights from the Middle Ages. Yes, and 9-11. All these kind of ideas here. ”

While hanging around in the center, guests will see two different series of videos — Ed Osborn’s “Albedo Prospect” and George Legrady’s “Voice of Sisyphus.” Both of the artists used the combination of image and sound to create some near real life environments for the audience. In “Voice of Sisyphus,” there are nine different visual and sonic sequences ranging from 15 to 60 seconds with different sound and visual qualities to achieve unique surroundings under different circumstances.

In one section of the center, there are 30 small loudspeakers hung from the ceiling, which make up Paul DeMarinis’s “Jiffy_pop.” Each of the speakers is covered with a sheet of tinfoil and activated by the mechanism of a needle suspended over the foil. The motion of the needle pops in and out of the mechanism, which determines the rhythm of the beating. DeMarinis has been interested in making noises with different things since age four. He was one of the first artists to use computers in live performances.

David Familian is the artistic director of the Beall Center. He has been planning this event with his co-workers for a year.

“I wanted to do a show to dedicate to sound, which I had never done before. I wanted the works to go from being musical to electronic click and clack. The sound can be purposefully made, or come out randomly. The main point is to gather the musical sounds, the electronic sound, and the natural sound,” Familian said. The whole idea of the show is influenced by John Cage, a sound artist

who was a fan of almost all styles of sound and music.

Jackie Qiu is a fourth year film and media student. She has always been intested in sound effects and movie background music. “I can’t think of another word except ‘cool.’” She pointed to Jaffe’s “Wappen Field,” “It was kinda creepy when I was first standing behind the mask, hearing the sounds within it. But then it’s getting so interesting. I couldn’t help to walk around from one to another. The idea is just brilliant.”

The exhibition will be ongoing from October 3, 2013 to January 25, 2014.

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