



Durational Art & Music Performance to Transform the Parrish, Courtesy OptoSonic Tea

September 26, 2019

by Pat Rogers

The Parrish Art Museum will have a lot in common with Watermill Center (and maybe the psychedelic sixties) on Friday, September 27, 2019, when it becomes the venue for a durational performance of sound and visual art, courtesy of the artist project OptoSonic Tea. Infused with a Swiss influence, "OptoSonic Tea @ the Parrish" brings together 18 artists from Switzerland, New York City, East End and other locales for the Parrish's Platform presentation, an annual series where artists are invited to interpret the museum's building or grounds and install art in response.

Eighteen artists will converge on the Parrish to create an evening of improvisational art, unfolding from 7 to 11 p.m. on September 27, 2019. Divided equally between sound and visual artists, projections and live music will enliven the grounds and architecture of the Parrish in "OptoSonic Tea @ the Parrish." Set in various locations, visitors can expect to see projected art that's improvised on the spot in response to the Parrish's architecture or landscape and reacts to setting and mood created by sound artists creating live music nearby using a wild range of instrumentation.

"It's a real special project," said Corinne Erni, Parrish Art Museum's Senior Curator of ArtsReach and Special Projects, who invited OptoSonic to create a unique evening for the Parrish. "It is a collective experience of wonder that will allow visitors to interact with one other and the artists, and to literally see the Parrish in a new light."



OptoSonic Tea at Pioneer Works in Brooklyn in 2017.
Image courtesy of Pioneer Works and Parrish Art Museum.

If OptoSonic's [10th anniversary performance](#) in 2017 at Pioneer Works in Brooklyn is any indication, the East End is in for a treat for the eyes and ears. While also considered a durational performance, OptoSonic Tea experiences differ from durational performances presented at the Watermill Center in that they feature improvised projected visual art and music versus theater, a mainstay of Watermill Center's international summer residency program. Durational performances presented

there typically emphasize a single performer or a small group of performance artists manifesting pieces of avant-garde theater. At Pioneer Works, OptoSonic Tea awashed the interior space with pulsing colors and traveling forms radiating from visual artists working live along with improvisational performances by musicians.

“The performance at the Parrish will be very similar to what we did at Pioneer Works for our 10th Anniversary,” OptoSonic Tea co-founder [Katherine Liberovskaya](#) said in a phone interview, shortly after returning from performing in a European festival. “If you watch [the video](#), you’ll understand what we’re doing. At Pioneer Works, we were inside and reacted to the interior architecture and at the Parrish we’ll be outside and use the sides of the building and other places. I’m really excited to project on the walls of the Parrish.”



OptoSonic Tea at Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, in 2017 for OptoSonic 10 Year Anniversary. Photo by Katherine Liberovskaya. Courtesy Parrish Art Museum.

OptoSonic Tea originated as a series of salon-type meetings exploring the ways live visuals can unfold in conjunction with live audio and music performances. The project was founded in 2007 by Liberovskaya; an intermedia and experimental video artist; [Ursula Scherrer](#); a performance artist and visual artist whose work includes video, installation and multi-media; and composer [Michael J. Schumacher](#), an experimental musician and sound artist who produced the series at his New York gallery.

In addition to heightening awareness about the art of live improvisational projected imagery, OptoSonic Tea included discussions among the artists and with the public. Going against the convention of serving wine at art openings and events, their meetings served tea and gave rise to the name OptoSonic Tea, Liberovskaya said.

For the “OptoSonic Tea @ the Parrish” event on September 27, 2019, all three co-founders reunite to produce the event and also perform. Schumacher heads the musical half with the pair of women co-managing the visual portion of the event. The trio also collaborated to create the sound installation *OptoSonic Echoes*, currently installed near the entrance of the Parrish through October 15, 2019. Opening on August 15, 2019, *OptoSonic Echoes* provides a mix of musical excerpts and artist dialogue from performers who are participating in the “OptoSonic Tea @ the Parrish” event.

Intended as both preview and a sound art piece that continues the “OptoSonic Tea @ the Parrish” event beyond its one-evening experience, the convergence of 18 artists making art improvisationally in reaction to the Parrish grounds will be a unique experience.

Visitors can expect to encounter immersive and random audio created through a variety of instruments including synthesizers, bagpipes, violin and voice. Visualists will create movable art through projecting and manipulating a wide range of media including analog video mixers and

video programs including Jitter, VDMX, modul8, film, slides, Magic Lantern and Synkie.

Participating visual artists are Liberovskaya, Scherrer, Benton C Bainbridge, Bradley Eros, Andy Guhl, Kit Fitzgerald, Asi Föcker, CHiKA, Chris Jordan (cj) and LoVid (Kyle Lapidus and Tali Hinkis). Sound artists participating are Schumacher, Marcia Bassett, Ranjit Bhatnagar, Shelley Hirsch, Laura Ortman, Emma Souharce, Keiko Uenishi and Shane Weeks.

The artists were invited to visit the Parrish, walk the grounds and pick locations that speak to them personally, Erni said. Many of the artists have performed together previously so many of the artists are already in tune with each other and look forward to performing with those who have never collaborated before, she explained.

Putting the unique program together was a natural for Erni as she had worked with both Scherre and Schumacher previously in art project abroad and in the United States. Erni and Scherre are Swiss nationals (as is Liberovskaya) and the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia came aboard as a supporter of the Parrish project and made connections with several Swiss artists who are performing at the Parrish. The Hamptons art museum building was designed by Swiss architectural firm [Herzog & de Meron](#) adding an interesting conceptual layer for the Swiss connection, Erni said.

OptoSonic @ the Parrish is also presented in collaboration with New York City based Harvestworks, a not-for-profit organization founded by artists in 1977 that supports the creation and presentation of work using new and evolving technologies.

Beyond providing events and awareness into the inner workings of improvisational visual and sound art performances, OptoSonic Tea also aimed to equalize improvisational visual artists and place them on par with their sound artist counterparts, Liberovskaya said. OptoSonic Tea was founded in the early years of live visuals, when the art form first began to rise in the early 2000, she said. In those days, the two art disciplines were often performed in club scenes, concerts and avant-garde sound events with music receiving the top billing, she said.

Ensuring experimental projected visual artists would receive recognition as artists in their own rights by audiences was important part of OptoSonic Tea's concept, she said. So was displacing the impression that the projected visuals were merely an automated mix of color and pattern and not the work of an artist creating specific visuals that are mixed and selected in the moment, she said.

"It might be difficult for audiences to tell that they're not seeing pre-recorded images but they're not," she said. "Everything is being done right there and in respond to the room, the sound and what's around us. We're experienced at this so that's why it may not look like, to many people, like we're putting the visuals together and making decisions on the spot."

OptoSonic Tea salon-style meetings were hosted by Diapason Gallery, headed by Schumacher, who presented the events in Chelsea and in Brooklyn, until its closing in 2011. Afterwards, Liberovskaya and Scherrer mounted OptoSonic evenings in various venues in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Long Island and in Europe. Most recently, they staged "OptoSonic Swiss" in April 2019 in a Capuchin monastery as part of Kulturnacht Solothurn in Switzerland.



OptoSonic Tea in Solothurn, Switzerland, April 2019. Photo by Katherine Liberovskaya. Courtesy Parrish Art Museum.

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Katherine Liberovskaya. Photo by Galya. Courtesy Parrish Art Museum.

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“OptoSonic Tea @ the Parrish” is a continuation of a concept that the collective conceived for its tenth anniversary celebration at Pioneer Works in 2017.

BASIC FACTS: “OptoSonic Tea @ the Parrish” will be presented Friday, September 27, 2019, from 7 to 11 p.m. at the Parrish Art Museum, 279 Montauk Highway, Water Mill, NY 11976. Admission is \$12 or free for museum members, children and Students. Click [here](#) to reserve. Click [here](#) for event details.

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