



EXPLORING PARTY

Party as Art. From Warhol's *Exploding Plastic Inevitable (EPI)* to Now
Live performances, graphic art, exhibition, screenings, presentations

Introduction

Andy Warhol's 1966 show *Exploding Plastic Inevitable (EPI)* featured all the pop-cultural media of the day: music, multiple projections, lighting design, the spectator as living screen, dance, performance – with these ingredients, Warhol invented a multimedia event that was both art and a party.

Transforming parties into art goes back even earlier, as can be seen in Maya Deren's experimental film *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (1946); a filmic tradition that leads to Sam Taylor-Wood's *Third Party* (1999) amongst others. Installation artists have also worked on the topic, for example Philippe Parreno, who extracted a whole exhibition from a party in his *Snow Dancing* (Dijon 1995). Or Tobias Rehberger, artistically designing the university's roof terrace as a party space for the *Skulptur. Projekte in Münster* in 1997, setting a scene for the party as social sculpture.

Even established art institutions are throwing an increasing number of parties lately, mainly to attract a younger audience. A classic art show like the Venice Biennale features an extensive programme of parties, and it's easy to perceive the Art Basel Miami Beach primarily as a party event, and only secondarily as one of the world's most important art fairs. Several art institutions have even organised exhibitions resembling parties, witness the recent *sonic process* exhibition in the Centre Georges Pompidou (2002). But mostly it's the media art spaces that combine their activities with parties: the ars electronica in Linz, Podewil, the Transmediale and urban drift in Berlin, the Filmwinter and Mediaspace in Stuttgart. Often, acts that played the lounge in a previous year are honoured with space in the official exhibition next time around, especially if they work on the visualisation of music.

So the party has a long history as a space for experimental art forms, it is an off-space for subcultures, but also a semi-official in-space, it is a space for aesthetic and social energies – this is what the *Exploring Party* project will demonstrate in practice while opening a theoretical discourse in its exhibition and event programme. For the first time, the focus will be on artists creating parties within the rooms of an art institution.

Concept

The *Exploring Party* project takes a close look at the party as an artistic medium. A small exhibition, lectures, screenings, an installation of graphic art and three multimedia live performances focus on the party as an art form. A special focus lies on the live visualisation of music.

Three multimedia live performances for the first time place an artistic approach to the party topic within the rooms of a cultural institution, featuring music, VJs (video jockeys), dance, graphic art and motion graphics. Visual Music – a genre where musicians and VJs, mostly with a background in the club scene, join for an audiovisual performance – has found its way into the lobbies and back rooms of cultural institutions before, but now it takes centre stage with these live events.

Andy Warhol's *EPI* is the main reference point for the discussion of party as art. Two things are central: the accumulation of media and the interaction of media – finding new possibilities in both. Since the audience at *EPI* was severely stressed out by the collected forces of the media there, felt steamrollered by media overkill, the second idea, the interaction between the media, looks more promising.

This is the starting point for *Exploring Party*, especially in the three live performances. Today it's possible to digitally produce sounds and images in real time, and to digitally tie these together – so what new roads are open for the interaction between the media? Visual Music is at the centre of developments here, the genre steadily experimenting with audiovisual interaction. Visual Music has its roots mostly in a club and party environment. Here's where the aesthetics of earlier avant-garde filmers have been developed to find fitting visualisations for dance music – which, going back again, already lies at the heart of Warhol's *EPI*.

It was Warhol who used the freedom of a party context to experiment with the artistic possibilities of a party – ultimately turning the party into a work of art. Party as art, here we come full circle: this is our concern, questioning the history of media, the actuality of media, the status accorded to different arts. An attempt to answer these questions must go beyond a simple presentation in an exhibition. That's why party as art is not just a topic that the *Exploring Party* project discusses and reflects, but something the live events will realise in performance.

Films (exhibition and screenings)

The exhibition and the screenings for *Exploring Party* present a selection of films and videos that exemplify different artistic approaches to the topic – transforming real parties into filmic works or constructing parties through the medial possibilities of film. Central to all these works are the main ingredients in a party: music and dance.

Maya Deren, *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (1946), 16mm, 14'30

Ritual in Transfigured Time divides into three parts that are based on different rituals. The second part shows a social event, focussing on the highly social rite of greeting one another at a party. The guests touch hands, they talk, make gestures while they move through the room, creating a kind of choreography, a shake-hands minuet. This is a silent movie, you don't hear the conversation, so the movements of mouths shaping words are part of the choreography. The choreography is not really danced, it is created in montage, in the cutting room, a choreography created through cinematic technique.

Jonas Mekas, *Velvet Underground's First Public Appearance* (1966), 8mm transferred to DVD, 3'11

The film is based on Jonas Mekas' *Anthropological Sketches* and has been re-edited by the artist in 2006. It follows the style of his film diaries, beginning with an early incarnation of EPI where the Velvet Underground play on the occasion of a psychiatrists' convention in New York in January 1966. In April, the first public EPI show is staged at the Dom, a New York club, now featuring singer Nico amidst the complete arsenal of slides, films and a light show. The film is done handheld, with many jumpcuts, restless and obscure, and so it adequately catches the EPI show and its effect on the audience – it's confusing the senses, it's orgiastic, it's exhilarating.

Ronald Nameth, *Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable* (1967), 16mm transferred to DVD, 18'30

Ronald Nameth's documentation and interpretation of Warhol's EPI on film is a central point of reference when investigating "party as art". Warhol's show featured screaming electronic instruments, the very special vocals of Nico, dance, performance actions, stroboscope light games and psychedelic light and film projections. It is the beginning of a new multimedial format: party as art. In May 1966 the complete troupe headed by Warhol went touring clubs and museums throughout the US and Canada. In June they hit Chicago. Filmmaker Ronald Nameth recorded there the performances every night for a week. The material was edited into a 12-minute film, with alternate versions existing. Nameth's film is more than just documentation or reportage, as Gene Youngblood soon points out in his 1970 book *Expanded Cinema*. It is, like Warhol's EPI, an aesthetic experiment, exploding the footage and putting it back together differently until it's a prismatic turmoil of layers and fragments:

"Watching the film is like dancing in a strobe room: time stops, motion retards, the body seems separate from the mind. [...] Nameth does with cinema what the Beatles do with music: his film is dense, compact, yet somehow fluid and light. It is extremely heavy, extremely fast, yet airy and poetic, a mosaic, a tapestry, a mandala that sucks you into its whirling maelstrom. The final shots of Gerard Malanga tossing his head in slow motion and freezing in several positions create a ghostlike atmosphere, a timeless and ethereal mood that lingers and haunts long after the images fade. Using essentially graphic materials, Nameth rises above a mere graphic exercise: he makes kinetic empathy a new kind of poetry."

Charles Wilp, *Afri Cola Films* (1968ff), 35mm transferred to DVD, 10'40

Charles Wilp made his first commercial for Afri Cola in 1968. It features Marianne Faithfull, Petula Clark and Alice Vatters dressed up as nuns, lounging out on an Afri Cola binge. In the following years, Wilp produced a further eight spots for Afri Cola that follow the same characteristics: they provoke with scandalous motives, intoxication, ecstasy and sex appeal, featuring real stars like Donna Summer or Marsha Hunt. In 1973, a naked man embodies the desire for Afri Cola, probably the first nude and therefore fully emancipated man in the history of the German commercial. A rather harmless soft drink is made into a fashionable beverage that promises to give you all you could wish for, from psychedelic flashes to sexual liberation. A truly "sexy-mini-super-flower-pop-op-cola (everything's in AFRI-COLA)"...

The Light Surgeons, *Wild Man of New York RMX* (2002), video, 5'28

The Light Surgeons have formed as a collective in 1995 and follow an aesthetic in the Expanded Cinema tradition. They work with carefully planned overlays of projections in a hybrid that combines elements of multi-directional film art, stage shows and party visuals. That is what brings them close to the Berlin VJ team Die Pfadfinderei who also

work as a collective. The Light Surgeons can effortlessly transform surroundings, they turn an art event into a party and vice versa.

Pfadfinderei & Modeselektor, *Nightcreatures* (2004), video, 11'17

This is a video from the *Labland* DVD which Pfadfinderei and Modeselektor have published on the DVD label Dalbin in Paris. The DVD is innovative in that Modeselektor's music does not exist outside of the videos, all tracks are genuine audiovisual productions. *Nightcreatures* is based on documentary footage from live performances in Germany and France, at clubs and art institutions and at larger open-air cultural events. The different approaches to work, depending on a situational context, become evident. Still, *Nightcreatures* does not simply cut from one live performance to the next with a purpose of recording events. The footage is treated in post production, Pfadfinderei layer their trademark graphics on top of the material, and so – similar in that to Ronald Nameth's film on Warhol's *EPI* – the result is an audiovisual work that completely transposes the live situation into the two dimensions of video.

Rojo, *The Good Ones* (2005), video, 3'33

Rojo's video to music by The Kills is full of references to art and party situations, especially to Warhol's Factory and his *EPI*. The opening of an exhibition, where art and party traditionally mingle, is at the centre of the video. The Kills are playing placed as a living sculpture on a pedestal. Around them, an orgiastic art party escalates, playing on not just Warhol and the Factory crew (especially persons with film and Polaroid cameras) but also Beuys' blackboards, Nam Jun Paik's monitor sculptures and Yves Klein's anthropometries.

Yvette Klein, *Rave Rabbit* (2006), video, 3'28

In her *Rave Rabbit* video, Yvette Klein reacts to Dominik Eulberg's music with a certain irony. The ravers are not human, they're forest animals, and especially rabbits, perfect for word play and befitting the title of the track. Eulberg, who studies biology besides his musical career and is known as a lover of nature (witness the many field recordings used as samples in his music), appears himself in the video, dressed as a hunter. But he does not use his gun, instead, like a contemporary Orpheus, he calls all the animals of the forest around him and together they rave to his music. The art of hunting turns into a party for all creatures.

Robert Heel, *What Makes a Good Party* (2007), video, 4'34

This video is made from found footage of educational movies from the 1950s and 1960s that deal with parties and the perfect lifestyle. With startling cuts and reverse cuts Robert Heel lays open the moral hypocrisy of the times. He puts some unvarnished truths into the mouths of the actors until a very decorous party turns into a hippie party – certain necessary ingredients in a good party just can't be found in a guide for good behaviour. Luckily, a film has montage, and with the help of film techniques even a square party can be changed into a screaming feast.

Graphic Art & Motion Graphics

s&f (Maik Stapelberg and Daniel Fritz), Oliver Moore and vonM/Matthias Siegert

Graphic artists Maik Stapelberg and Daniel Fritz plus Oliver Moore have worked on the visualisation of music before, for the *DSPLY: visual music* exhibition (2003, Ex-Ikea, Stuttgart). s&f are the designers for pulver records, completely at home with music graphics, and vonM/Matthias Siegert, who co-initiated the *DSPLY* exhibition, developed their graphics into motion graphics for that event already.

In co-ordination with Oliver Moore, s&f will author the graphic design of all print products for *Exploring Party*, especially poster, flyer and this brochure. Their work will combine elements of a late-1960s Pop aesthetic, especially of psychedelic graphics, with elements of the contemporary Minimal Techno and Electro scene, which is where the music for the live performances will come from.

Oliver Moore will design a graphic art installation for the glass walls in the glass tract of the Württembergischer Kunstverein, a work full of planes and colours which also combines Psychedelia (the colours) with Minimal Techno and Electro (the forms).

These graphic interpretations of music for *Exploring Party*, created by graphic artists, will then be used by the VJ vonM/Matthias Siegert as material in his animations in a live performance.

Live Programme

Live performances with electronic music and visuals are at the core of the *Exploring Party*, flanked by presentations and screenings to try out, and reflect on, the party in an art environment.

Schedule

Saturday, 16 June 2007
8 pm, opening

Presentation: **Maxa Zoller** (art historian and curator, London): "Never before has art been so much fun: An introduction to party as art"

Especially since the Golden Twenties, artists have read festivities and parties as a metaphor for society and its contradictions. Otto Dix portrays a decadent Germany dancing the Charleston in his famous *Metropolis* triptych from 1928. In the 1960s, the party is a promise for communal live-together, like in Warhol's *EPI*. But that same year, Michelangelo Antonioni's film *Blow-Up* interprets the party as a media-fed frenzy that holds no future. In 1995, Andreas Gursky photographs a rave party and blows up the image to 2 x 3 metres. Pierre Huyghe and Rirkrit Tiravanija simply organise grill parties and other festivities and declare them to be art.

The party was always permeating art as topic, since it is a direct expression of a culture. This presentation introduces the most important interpretations and attempts a brief history of the party in art.

Screening: **Maya Deren**, *Ritual in Transfigured Time* (USA, 1946, 16mm)

Audiovisual live performance: **Alexandra Mahnke** (dance, Stuttgart), **Aleksandar Nesic** (drums, Stuttgart) and **Anja Füsti** (drums, Stuttgart)

Drums triggering video and dance: when the drum sets are played, a resulting MIDI signal controls videos that show elements of dance, so that music and the dancing movements are brought in step. Dance is created through the music's rhythmic impulses, especially the bass drum, important mood factor in many a party: It's The Beat!

Wednesday, 20 June 2007

8pm, video interview and screening

Video interview: **Ronald Nameth** (filmmaker, Stockholm)

Screening: **Jonas Mekas**, *Velvet Underground's First Public Appearance* (1966), **Ronald Nameth**, *Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable* (1967), **Charles Wilp**, *Afri Cola Films* (1968ff)

Friday, 22 June 2007

Audiovisual live performances with electronic music and visuals

9:30 pm, **Modeselektor** (BPitch Control, Berlin), **Die Pfadfinderei** (visuals, Berlin)

11 pm, **Inverse Cinematics** (pulver records, Stuttgart), VJ **vonM/Matthias Siegert** (visuals, Stuttgart)

Modeselektor (music) and Die Pfadfinderei (visuals) have taken their *Labland* show to the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the Volksbühne Berlin, amongst other venues. For *Exploring Party*, they will play a special audiovisual live set. These acts have been crossing the borders playing both in clubs and in art institute environments for some time, which places Die Pfadfinderei and Modeselektor at the heart of *Exploring Party*, linking party and art.

In the second set of the evening, VJ vonM/Matthias Siegert will bring the graphic design for *Exploring Party* to life, turning them into Motion Graphics to the music of Inverse Cinematics. This is combined with found footage of party scenes, so the topic is referenced from two different directions.

Saturday, 23 June 2007

9:30 pm, audiovisual live performances with electronic music and visuals

Dominik Eulberg, Triple R (Traum Schallplatten – Traum/Trapez/MBF, Köln), **Yvette Klein** (visuals, Köln), **Christian Jamin** (visuals, Basel)

This live set from Dominik Eulberg (music) and Triple R (music) with Yvette Klein (video) und Christian Jamin (video) is exclusively designed for the event. Based on the use of nature elements in Dominik Eulberg's music, Yvette Klein and Christian Jamin will play a visual set on an environmental note. Yvette Klein is responsible for most of the Traum artwork and has created several videos for the label, including some to tracks from Dominik Eulberg. Music graphics, music video and visual music combine in her approach and start a dialogue with Christian Jamin's own visualisations of music.

Impressum / Credits

Zeitraum / Duration: 16.–23. Juni 2007 / 16–23 June 2007

Kuratoren / Curators: Dr. Cornelia Lund, Dr. Holger Lund

Projekttassistent / Assistants: Myriam El Abdi, Meike Frank, Florian Härle

Veranstalter / Institution: fluctuating images. contemporary media art e.V., Stuttgart

Veranstaltungsort / Venue: Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart e.V., Schlossplatz 2, 70173 Stuttgart, www.wkv-stuttgart.de

Übersetzung, Lektorat / Translation, copy editing: Lutz Eitel

Grafik / Graphics: s&f (www.stapelbergundfritz.de), Oliver Moore

Exploring Party ist Teil des zweijährigen Projekts *Visual Music* (2007–2008) der Medienkunstgalerie fluctuating images e.V. und wird gefördert von der Landesstiftung Baden-Württemberg. Zum Abschluss ist 2008 eine Publikation mit DVD geplant, in die auch *Exploring Party* eingeschlossen sein soll.

Exploring Party wird gefördert von: Landesstiftung Baden-Württemberg, MFG Filmförderung Baden-Württemberg, Medienteam der Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart, Kulturamt der Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart, Stiftung Landesbank Baden-Württemberg, Schwedische Botschaft, Audi Zentrum Stuttgart, Prolab Stuttgart, Haller Löwenbräu, Smirnoff Ice, afri cola sowie Rilling Sekt. Elektroakustische Unterstützung: f.concept – licht + tontechnik (www.f-concept.de). Medienpartner: Lift Stuttgart und re.flect.

Exploring Party is part of the project *Visual Music* (2007–2008) by media art gallery fluctuating images e.V. and is supported by Landesstiftung Baden-Württemberg. For 2008, a publication including a DVD is planned, which will include *Exploring Party*.

Supported by: Landesstiftung Baden-Württemberg, MFG Filmförderung Baden-Württemberg, Medienteam Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart, Kulturstadt Landeshauptstadt Stuttgart, Stiftung Landesbank Baden-Württemberg, Swedish Embassy, Audi Zentrum Stuttgart, Prolab Stuttgart, Haller Löwenbräu, Smirnoff Ice, afri cola and Rilling Sekt.

Sound: f.concept - licht + tontechnik (www.f-concept.de). Media partners: Lift Stuttgart and re.flect.

Dank an / Thanks to:

Frederike Brocke, Hans D. Christ, Gerd Dieterich, Iris Dressler, Khoi Duong, Annette Helfferich, Alexander Holz, Christian Koch, Romina Langer, Gitte Lindmaier, Sebastian Ludwig, magnet booking, Angela Masoch, Maya Stendhal Gallery, Vivien Moskaliuk, Ronald Nameth, Eva-Maria Offermann, Jürgen Sauer, Max Stilz, traum booking, Wolfgang Ostberg, Sandra Wassermann, Monika Wüst

www.modeselektor.com – Modeselektor
www.pfadfinderei.com – Die Pfadfinderei
www.dominik-eulberg.de – Dominik Eulberg
www.traumschallplatten.de – Riley Reinhold aka Triple R
www.traumschallplatten.de/videos.html – Yvette Klein
www.videoplus.ch – Christian Jamin
www.pulver-rec.com – Inverse Cinematics
www.vonm.de – vonM/Matthias Siegert
www.zenitundnadir.de – Aleksandar Nesic