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Interview with Creative Code Art, New York

Interview conducted by Sara Luna Ruíz in the framework of "AV Assemblies. Conversations on Sight and Sound," a project by Ana Carvalho, Cornelia Lund, and Sara Luna Ruíz. The questions were jointly answered by the Creative Code Art team: Erin Wajufos, Eric Lee, Leonard Arango & Mauricio Suaza // social media tags: @creativecodeart @erinwajufos @eggsovereager @v.a_morbo @uma.gee

- Could you, please, present yourself and give a short description of your work/relation to AV performance

Creative Code Art is a community collective of innovative visual artists led by Yaser Hagi, Erin Wajufos, and Eric Lee. We curate audio visual events under the &FRIENDS banner and organize workshops both in person and virtually, with our primary hub based in NYC. Our work focuses on highlighting emerging new media artists from around the globe, and we're actively expanding our reach internationally—our upcoming "EXPANDED CODE LIVE" exhibition with Bogota Experimental Festival marks our first major international curation, bringing on co-producers Leonard Arango, Mauricio Suaza, and the EXP (Bogota Experimental Festival) team including Julian Medina who leads the Bogota Experimental team in Colombia.

Our collective impact spans over 100,000+ artists through audio visual performances, workshops, and community digital art submissions that showcase both local and global talent across social media platforms. Notable past events include "&FRIENDS," which featured PUBLIC VISUALS from Japan at LUME STUDIOS and livecode.nyc at Brooklyn Art Haus in 2023. Our "CREATIVE CODE ART SHOWCASE (VR)" won the TELLY AWARD in 2021 and included artists from 20 different countries, demonstrating our commitment to fostering an international community of AV performers and new media artists.

- For how long have you been involved in AV performance?

For over 6 years, we've been immersed in AV performance while developing Creative Code Art as both performers and curators. Our collective has grown into a comprehensive event hub dedicated to curating emerging new media artists and building connections across the international AV community. As individual artists, we each perform under our own names, working

with diverse technologies including TouchDesigner and Unreal Engine for visual programming, Eurorack modular synthesizers and other music hardware, Max/MSP and Pure Data and other digital audio synthesis and digital signal processing environments, and live coding from Orca to Sonic Pi to TidalCycles/Strudel to Hydra and more, to create our audiovisual works.

- Could you, please, shortly describe your technical set-up.

Here's a response format:

Our technical setup for the Colombian exhibition involves 12 artists performing across 8 different sets, with each artist bringing their own unique configuration. The visual components utilize various applications including TouchDesigner and MaxMSP, along with AI-powered visual systems. For live coding performances, artists are working with platforms like TidalCycles and Strudel. On the audio side, we're using Ableton Live for music production alongside eurorack modular synthesizer setups. Each performance requires HDMI connections for visual output, and since every artist has tailored their setup to match their specific creative vision, the technical requirements vary considerably from set to set. This diversity in technical approaches reflects the range of artistic practices represented in the exhibition.

Our artist line-up:

CNDSO < @cndso >

EFE CE ELE < @efeceele.cazzida.dot >

JUAN PABLO FERLAT < @juanpabloferlat >

NIEBLA < @niebla.mediant / @sebastian_correal / @jeffrey_esquivel_ / @amnieto86 >

PABLO E. PENA P. < @p3p510 >

RAF RAF < @rafapuyana / @rafrobeat / @les_raf_raf >

SEBASTIAN GONZALEZ DIXON < @sebastiangonzalezdixon >

SKULPTOR < @skulptormusica / @anodromedan >

- What are the core concerns, ideas, or themes that inform and guide your artistic practice?

Our artistic practice is centered around democratizing access to new media art and breaking down geographical barriers within the AV community. We're deeply concerned with creating inclusive spaces where emerging artists can experiment with cutting-edge technologies like live coding, modular synthesis, and real-time visual programming without traditional gatekeeping structures.

A core theme that guides our work is the intersection of community building and technological innovation—we believe that the most compelling AV performances emerge when artists have supportive networks to share knowledge, collaborate across disciplines, and push creative boundaries together. Through our curation, we aim to highlight how diverse cultural perspectives can transform the same technological tools into vastly different artistic expressions, fostering a global dialogue that enriches the entire new media landscape.

- Do you have any guidelines or specific criteria when it comes to selecting artist for AV performances and events?

Our artist selection criteria center on technical experimentation, conceptual depth, and the ability to create compelling live experiences that push the boundaries of audiovisual perfor-

mance. We look for artists who demonstrate innovative approaches to real-time creation, whether through live coding, modular synthesis, generative visuals, or hybrid analog-digital techniques. Beyond technical skill, we prioritize artists who contribute meaningful perspectives to the discourse around technology and creativity, particularly those whose work challenges conventional approaches or introduces fresh cultural contexts to new media art. We're intentionally committed to building line-ups that reflect the true diversity of the global AV community—actively seeking out artists from different racial, ethnic, gender, and geographic backgrounds whose experiences and cultural perspectives inform their creative practices. This means moving beyond industry defaults and networking circles that often perpetuate homogeneous line-ups, instead dedicating time to research and connect with artists from marginalized communities, different countries, and underrepresented groups who bring essential voices to new media art but may not have the same visibility or access to performance opportunities.

- How does your creative process unfold — from initial concept to final audiovisual outcome?

Our creative process begins with identifying a conceptual framework that will guide the event experience, then we research and select artists whose work will create meaningful dialogue and complementary tensions. We collaborate closely with selected artists during development, providing technical support while allowing their individual practices to evolve naturally. Our role balances curatorial guidance with logistical coordination, creating the conditions for artistic risk-taking and spontaneous moments that can only emerge through live AV performance—where our curation provides the container, but the artists' real-time creativity generates the unpredictable and transformative outcomes.

- How would you describe your working process: as collaborative, more hierarchical, or any other form?

Our working process is fundamentally collaborative, operating as a horizontal collective where Erin Wajufos and Eric Lee have been leading the curatorial efforts for the “&FRIENDS” showcase while maintaining shared decision-making rather than following a traditional hierarchical structure. This collaborative approach extends beyond our core team—when we work with international partners like the Bogota Experimental Festival team, we integrate co-producers Leonard Arango, Mauricio Suaza, and the EXP team as equal voices in shaping the creative direction. Our process involves extensive dialogue and consensus-building, whether we're selecting artists, developing event concepts, or solving technical challenges. We believe this collaborative framework is essential to our mission of democratizing access to new media art, as it mirrors the inclusive, non-hierarchical spaces we aim to create for artists. Each team member brings their own performance background and technical expertise to the table, but final decisions emerge through collective discussion rather than top-down authority. This approach can be more time-intensive, but it ensures that our events authentically reflect diverse perspectives and creates stronger buy-in from both our team and the artists we work with.

- Medium vs. message: In your creative process, what comes first — the idea you want to express or the medium you choose to express it? How do they influence each other? And how does that influence your aesthetic choices?

For us, the message consistently comes first—we begin with the voices and stories we want to amplify, particularly from underrepresented communities who use AV performance as a powerful outlet for expression. This festival exemplifies that approach: we're drawn to frameworks like protest culture and Latin voices because these artists have urgent, deeply emotional messages that demand to be heard. The medium then becomes the vehicle for that expression, whether it's live coding as a form of digital activism, modular synthesis channeling cultural memory, or real-time visuals that translate political urgency into immersive experience. However, once we select the medium, it profoundly shapes how the message unfolds—the real-time, improvisational nature of AV performance allows for raw, unfiltered emotional expression that pre-recorded work simply cannot capture. Our aesthetic choices emerge from this tension: we gravitate toward technical approaches that preserve spontaneity and authenticity, avoiding overly polished presentations that might sanitize the power of the original message. The medium and message become inseparable, where the immediacy of live coding or the physicality of modular performance becomes part of the political and emotional content itself.

- How do you organise the relationship between sound & image?

We see sound and image as equally vital forms of artistic expression that, when combined, create something more powerful than either medium alone—drawing from the cinematic storytelling of film, the immersive scale of large screens, and the immediate energy of DJ sets. This fusion allows our artists to harness the best of all these worlds: the narrative depth and visual sophistication of cinema, the communal experience and sonic impact of club culture, and the real-time responsiveness that makes each performance unique. By treating audio and visuals as co-equal partners rather than one supporting the other, artists can create layered experiences where their personal expression flows through both channels simultaneously, whether that's processing live audio through modular systems while generating corresponding visuals, or using live coding to manipulate both sound and image in real-time as one unified artistic statement.

- Did you observe any major changes in the field of AV performance?

We've witnessed significant momentum in AV performance gaining mainstream recognition, exemplified by the widespread acclaim for the Sphere's opening and ANYMA's ground-breaking audiovisual sets there, which brought immersive AV work to unprecedented audiences and budgets. Festivals like MUTEK have expanded internationally, opening crucial doors for artists to perform on global stages and legitimizing AV performance as a distinct artistic discipline rather than a niche subcategory. This growing recognition has created more opportunities for artists to access proper venues, technical resources, and audiences who understand the medium, while also raising the bar for what's possible in live audiovisual performance. As this field expands, we see Creative Code Art's role as creating accessible entry points and community support systems for emerging artists who want to be part of this movement—serving as a hub where artists can develop their practice, connect with peers, and gain the experience needed to eventually perform at these larger international platforms.

- Do you think that AI is an important new influence? If so, what does it change?

AI presents a complex duality for our community—while we've seen artists create compelling work using AI as a creative tool for generating visuals or processing audio in real-time performances, we're deeply concerned about its economic impact on the field. The worry isn't necessarily about AI as an expressive medium, but rather the growing reliance on AI-generated content that could displace the foundational skill of writing your own code, which we see as essential to authentic AV practice. There's a significant difference between an artist using AI as one tool among many in their creative arsenal versus the industry shifting toward AI-dependent workflows that devalue the technical craftsmanship and personal expression that comes from building systems from scratch. Our concern is that as AI becomes more prevalent, it could create economic pressures that push artists away from developing deep technical skills in favor of prompt engineering, potentially homogenizing the field and reducing opportunities for artists who've spent years mastering live coding, custom software development, and hardware integration that defines innovative AV performance.

- Does it generate a new AV aesthetics?

AI is generating new AV aesthetics when artists like Portrait XO, Hamill Industries, and Skulptor by Ana Roman—the latter who's performing in our showcase—harness AI as one element within broader multimedia practices rather than relying on it as their primary creative source. These artists demonstrate what we want to see: using AI tools to push boundaries while combining them with live coding, hardware manipulation, and real-time performance techniques that maintain their personal artistic expression. This approach creates genuinely new aesthetic possibilities that couldn't exist without AI, but also couldn't exist without the artist's technical skills and creative vision guiding the process. What concerns us is the opposite trend—artists generating content directly from platforms like Runway AI and presenting it as finished work without additional layers of personal expression or technical integration. The new aesthetics we're excited about emerge when AI becomes part of a larger toolkit for live performance, allowing artists to explore generative possibilities while maintaining the authenticity and unpredictability that defines compelling AV work.


- Which artists, theories, movements, or personal experiences have significantly influenced your work?

Our curatorial approach has been deeply influenced by groups like livecode.nyc, whose open call structure and commitment to diversifying line-ups without hierarchical gatekeeping has shaped how we think about accessible programming. Their model of collective governance—where anyone who wants to contribute can join and influence direction—mirrors our own collaborative philosophy and has shown us how to create truly inclusive spaces for AV artists. While we're witnessing exciting new interest in audiovisual curation globally, there's still a significant lack of programming opportunities worldwide, which makes these grassroots, community-driven models even more essential. This influence has guided us toward prioritizing emerging voices and underrepresented artists, ensuring our showcases function as stepping stones rather than exclusive platforms, and maintaining the principle that the best curatorial decisions emerge from diverse perspectives rather than individual taste-making or institutional hierarchies.

- How do you perceive the intersection between art and politics? Does your work engage with political or social discourse in any way?

Our work inherently engages with political discourse, particularly through our decision to partner with Colombia for this program—a choice that feels especially urgent given the current political climate in the United States where our president is persecuting Latin communities. We see art as a powerful tool for building bridges and fostering understanding across borders, particularly when political rhetoric seeks to divide and marginalize communities. By creating platforms for Latin voices and bringing together artists from different countries, we're actively working against isolationist policies and demonstrating the cultural richness that emerges from international collaboration. Our curation is inherently political because we prioritize artists from underrepresented communities and create spaces where diverse voices can express their experiences, whether that's through protest culture, cultural memory, or simply the act of existing and creating in spaces where they've been historically excluded. We believe that in times of increased political division, art becomes even more essential as a space for unity, empathy, and the kind of human connection that transcends the artificial boundaries that politics seeks to create.

- Suggestions of artists, artworks, or publications that relate to or resonate with your own work.

We're genuinely excited about the incredible diversity and depth of artistic voices in our showcase, each bringing unique perspectives that align perfectly with our mission of amplifying underrepresented communities and innovative approaches to AV performance. From Ana Roman's "ICE MAKINA," which uses TouchDesigner and Max for Live as weapons against immigration enforcement systems, creating a raw post-human scream that challenges border state logic, to RAF  RAF's live coding duo that reimagines cumbia through algorithmic improvisation, merging ancestral rhythms with digital experimentation. Pablo E. Peña P. brings over 25 years of experience exploring technology as both creative tool and inspiration source, while CNDSD presents "FURBOT," an AI-generated narrative about obsolete mechatronic toys that speculates on childhood technological desire and machinic tenderness.

The line-up also features Juan Pablo Ferlat, whose interconnected projects span video, installation, and alchemical sculpture to examine humanity's navigation of uncertainty, and Efe Ce Ele, who creates virtual forms dwelling between living and inert through code and particle systems in her project "Erosion." Sebastian Gonzalez Dixon presents "Lumentum," combining hyperformance with audience interaction and his Lumen Club electronic music, while Niebla fuses generative art with analog sound to create artificial atmospheres that connect technology and nature. These artists exemplify exactly what we're looking for—creators who use AV performance as both artistic expression and political statement, combining technical innovation with urgent cultural commentary, and demonstrating how live coding, generative systems, and real-time performance can serve as vehicles for resistance, memory, and future-building.