

A Perfect Match? On The Alliance Of Sound And Visuals.

Prof. Dr. Heike Sperling
Digital Visual Media

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In spring 2005, VISUAL MUSIC, a worldwide-appreciated exhibition, was shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles. Concerts, events and nightclubbing are hardly imaginable without the arts and crafts of live visuals at the moment. Lectures on VJing are immensely popular. Terms like “synesthesia” and “audiovisual” are used on an inflationary level. For the first time in the history of communication technology, computer volumes are processing music into pictures and vice versa in real-time.

Prof. Dr. Heike Sperling teaches at the Institute For Music And Media at the University of Music in Duesseldorf. She has been working successfully in motion graphics and as a creative director for almost 20 years. One may ask, why a music academy decided to employ a visual designer.

Prof. Dr. Heike Sperling introduces synesthesia as a neurobiological aspect in her current lecture. This inheritable phenomenon of sensual reception causes a co-agitation of a sense organ when another one is exposed to direct excitation. Colour-hearing is the most common kind of this sensation. Composers Franz von Liszt and Olivier Messiaen, painters Wassily Kandinsky and David Hockney, physics Nobel Price laureate Richard Feynman were; Blixa Bargeld of Einstürzende Neubauten and French Pianist Hélène Grimaud are considered as contemporary proxies of synaesthesia. So, what can we learn from their ideal “joint sensual reception“?

In this context, Ms. Sperling presents several works made to create a direct communication of sound and visuals. From early experimental filmmakers such as Oskar Fischinger and Norman McLaren to current VJs and Music Video Directors like Hexstatic and Chris Cunningham.

All works are connected by their executive approach, meaning, the use of one medium to transport the other. How does a closer look on the connections between visuals and sound combined increase the quality and therefore the reception of advertising, animation and motion graphics and its craft?

The lecture will pinpoint the fact, that we can do much more than sound tracking high-end visuals with pop tunes by analyzing audiovisual logos, type-animations in title sequences and motion graphics for TV design. The bar needs to be raised.

To achieve the highest quality level possible in audio-visual productions and thus making the highest impact possible to the audience, audio-visual artists, such as sound designer, score composers, graphic designers, film makers, creative directors, etc., need to update and network on a regular base. David Lynch likes to stress at all times, that music and sound design makes more than 50% of a movie. On the other hand, the idea of sound and visuals in an equally levelled marriage is still far from reality. Why is that?

So, let us ask you: Are they having a casual affair? Do they get along? Or, are they even a perfect match? Let's look at this exciting coupling of sound and picture...

Prof. Dr. Heike Sperling, born 1965, graduated in Communication Design from the University of Wuppertal, Germany. Sperling wrote her dissertation of Aesthetics under the guidance of Prof. Bazon Brock. She received her PhD in 1999. She started her career as an assistant creative director of RTL Television, a German private broadcasting company. The development and launch of the corporate on-air design of the German private TV-channel VOX in 1993 remains one of her stand-out projects.

Between 1993 and 2002 Heike Sperling worked as a freelance producer, director and creative director in Germany and the US. Additionally, she produced music videos, focussing on experimental and electronic music. From 2000 to 2003 Dr. Sperling designed collages for Brand Eins, a leading German business magazine. In 2001, she developed the on-air corporate design for the launching campaign the new music TV-broadcaster VIVA PLUS as a freelance creative director and producer. From 2002 Dr. Sperling served two years as the Head of Design for the German public TV-broadcaster WDR. At WDR, she was responsible for the on-air-, set-, sound- and lighting design. Throughout her career, Dr. Heike Sperling received numerous awards for outstanding work in Germany and abroad. Today, she works as a creative consultant.

Dr. Heike Sperling is co-chairing with Prof. Manfred Becker the post-graduate-program Motion Design at Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg since 1998.

She has also been teaching at the University of the Arts (HFK) Bremen, the University of Applied Sciences Salzburg, Austria, the Academy of Art and Design (HGK) in Basel, Switzerland and NABA Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti Milano, Italy.

In 2004, Dr. Sperling was appointed a professorship by the University of Music Duesseldorf in Digital Visual Media at the Institute For Music And Media.

Prof. Dr. Heike Sperling initiated the lecture series BASECAMP at the Institute of Music and Media. Ever since, Professor Sperling curates the monthly event.

She regularly gives lectures at several European colleges and universities.