



**Intermedial Interference in Electroacoustic Audiovisual Composition: An
Investigation into Combining, Integrating, and Fusing Sound and the Moving Image**

A Portfolio of Audiovisual Compositions

Antonino Chiaramonte

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Abstract

Intermedial Interference in Electroacoustic Audiovisual Composition: An Investigation into Combining, Integrating, and Fusing Sound and the Moving Image

A Portfolio of Audiovisual Compositions

This doctoral research is a practice-based investigation into *Intermedial Interference* in electroacoustic audiovisual composition, which aims to explore combining, integrating, and fusing sound and the moving image to shape the final artefact. The research is grounded within the broader artistic practice category of intermedial arts, where creativity is not restricted to the use of sound to accompany the moving image but actively explores the interaction, combination, mutual influence, and interconnection between many different media in a time-based medial form of expression. The exegesis discusses a Portfolio of six audiovisual compositions that illustrate the development of intermedial compositional strategies based on the application of the intermedial interference concept. The compositions' sound properties are those of electroacoustic music with a *musique concrète* approach, while the visual imagery is abstracted from reality. The research aims to explore the boundaries, intersections, and the interference between non-narrative moving images and electroacoustic music in an intermedial creative context. An autoethnographic approach is employed to present, contextualise, and critically discuss the creative process and findings of this practice-based research. Ultimately, this research seeks to provide new insights into *intermedial audiovisual composition* practice and create novel and valuable opportunities for composers active in the audiovisual domain to explore intermedial thinking.

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Love is Absence, something we miss deeply.

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List of Accompanying Material

The Portfolio of compositions represents the practice element of this research. It provides, with the exegesis, answers to the research questions. The Portfolio can be accessed via the embedded links within the text.

Portfolio of Compositions

1. *No. 7: Color Study* (2017) (05:40)
2. *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento* (2018) (04:55)
3. *Absence - Présence* (2020) (06:27)
4. *Studio II - della Natura della Trasformazione* (2021) (08:56)
5. *Studio III - Space and Colour* (2022) (10:20)
6. *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* (2023) (11:03)

Please consider that the fifth composition's soundtrack is binaural, and the sixth was originally 5.1 but has been rendered in binaural. To listen to their sound mixes properly, please use headphones.

*A volte penso
di essere un sogno
che qualcuno si è dimenticato di fare,
il sogno nel cassetto
aperto nel momento sbagliato,
il dormiveglia di una dalia d'inverno
che lascia i suoi petali
alla brina che l'uccide.*

*Sometimes I think
to be a dream
that someone forgot to make,
the dream in the drawer
opened at the wrong time,
the doze of a winter dahlia
which leaves its petals
to the frost that kills it.*

Aldo Busi (1997)

Preface

My journey with music and moving images started almost simultaneously with my involvement in electroacoustic music composition. My background in music was that of a classically trained performer. I gained my first degree in flute at the Santa Cecilia Conservatoire in Rome in the early eighties. During the last years of my flute studies, I began to get involved in music composition and started studying contemporary music composition with Mauro Cardi, a renowned Italian composer. After my flute degree, I realised that a career as a performer was not the way to pursue my love for music, so I got more involved in compositional studies and practices. However, at the end of the eighties, I experienced a severe existential crisis and decided to interrupt my relationship with music as a professional practitioner.

I started pursuing another branch of creativity, which was photography. I was lucky to have a professional photographer as a friend who invited me to attend his studio. After a while, he granted me a small wage, and I became his assistant. This opportunity gave me a solid foundation in studio lighting, image composition, and developing and printing black and white photographs. I also pursued an independent career as a freelance photographer for theatrical stage performances, portraits, and actors' headshot portfolios. This professional experience would prove beneficial several years later for my current audiovisual production. In the early nineties, I eventually returned to my original passion; the bewitching chant of the musical muse was too charming not to follow.

I went back to studying composition but in the field of electronic music. The era of personal computers, DAWs, and analogue and digital sound processing was flourishing. For me, it was natural to divert my interests toward those means of music production. I got involved with a duo of well-known Italian flute players, great friends of mine at the time. Together, we established a trio, performing an eclectic repertoire: from medieval music to original live electroacoustic and mixed music. They were the frontmen, and I was the "entity" behind the scenes, a role more suited to my personality. I took care of their technology set-up, sound projection in live concerts, and composing several pieces of their contemporary repertoire. We toured the world extensively.

The beginning of the 2000s was the turning point of my music career. I decided to go back to formal studies. I attended the four-year Higher Diploma course (an equivalent of a Master's)

in Electroacoustic Music Composition at the Perugia Conservatoire, studying with Luigi Ceccarelli, one of the most influential Italian electroacoustic music composers of the last thirty years. After being awarded the post-graduate degree with the highest marks possible in Italy (10/10), I was awarded the first prize in the 34th International Competition of Electroacoustic Music – Bourges 2007 (1st category: œuvre d'esthétique formelle) with *Riflessioni* (2006). I gained several recognitions in the following years as a composer of acousmatic music and live electronics performer.

However, while studying electroacoustic composition, I started being involved in audiovisual practice. This other strain of creative interest led me to produce a few experimental short movies and documentaries in collaboration with directors and video artists who wanted more than a traditional music soundtrack for their works. They were keen to explore other kinds of audiovisual relationships; they were not content with the typical multimedia approach, in which the moving image and the film narrative ordinarily lead and control the soundtrack. This strain of professional practice and research started in 2004 with the electroacoustic soundtrack for the award-winning short movie *Lotta Libera* (2004), directed by Stefano Viali, and culminated with the production of the award-winning audiovisual composition *Falling* (2011), realised in collaboration with the video artist and director Adriano Cirulli. This latter work can be defined as my first proper collaborative intermedial audiovisual composition.

Since 2009, I have taught Performance and Interpretation of Electroacoustic Music at the Conservatoire of Frosinone. I gained tenure in this position in 2018. In 2016, I started my PhD at Bournemouth University under the supervision of Professor Stephen Deutsch and Dr Ambrose Seddon. After Stephen's retirement, Ambrose became my first supervisor, and Dr Trevor Hearing joined the supervisory team, inspiring my research journey with his contribution. I am grateful to them for their support, guidance, and advice. During these years, many other people and friends inspired and supported me: first, Dr Maike Helmers, who joined my supervisory team briefly and in an enriching way. Last but not least, Dr Panos Amelidis, whose wit and insightful feedback contributed to the final stage of this work. I am grateful to my friends Diego, Stefano, and Valerio for their precious feedback and to Anita, Émilie, Luca, Natasha, Sara Jane, and James, who contributed to realising some of my Portfolio compositions.

I want to dedicate this PhD to my supporting family, Salvatore and Ileana, my loving parents, my brothers Carlo and Luca, and my sons Federico and Edoardo. Without them, this would not have been possible. I still remember the expression of incredulity in the eyes of my parents when I told them that at the age of fifty-four, I wanted to return to formal academic studies with a commitment that would have required a challenging level of engagement at my age, considering all of life's obligations. I still remember my mother asking me now and then: "Well, Antonino, how are you getting on with your Master's?" without recalling the correct name of my academic and artistic endeavours. Unfortunately, they are not here anymore to enjoy this moment with me. The last few years, working on this research project, have marked a deep exploration of my inner self, a fundamental journey where the destination was not the aim, but rather, what happened in between was the core: the process of transformation.

All that you touch You Change.

All that you Change Changes you.

The only lasting truth Is Change.

God Is Change.

Octavia E. Butler (1993)

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Context

This doctoral research is a practice-based investigation into the development of novel creative strategies for electroacoustic audiovisual composition, which is part of the broader family of visual music (Hill 2010a). The research deals with intermediality from a practical point of view; the term intermediality relates, in general, to “all those phenomena that [...] in some way take place between media” (Rajewsky 2005, p.46).

Within this general context, I am proposing a novel concept I refer to as *Intermedial Interference*. This topic is the most relevant to address within my PhD’s theoretical and practice context. I define Intermedial interference as *the perceptual phenomenon arising from the interaction of different media features in the intermedial space*. The resulting interference can be characterised as either constructive or destructive. Intermedial space refers to *the perceptual space created by the integration and interaction of different media*. It conceptually defines the phenomenological experience of engaging with combined and integrated media elements in intermedial audiovisual composition.

Therefore, my approach to electroacoustic audiovisual composition is related to the broader artistic practice category of intermedial arts, hence, intermedial electroacoustic audiovisual composition or, shortly, *intermedial audiovisual composition*.

Intermedial audiovisual composition is part of a broader artistic practice known as intermedial composition, where creativity is not restricted solely to the use of sound and the moving image. It can be free to explore the interaction, combination, mutual influence, and interconnection between a vast array of media in non-time-based or time-based medial forms of expression.

Visual music works on fixed media have a time-based nature, which is related to the concept of composition. There are diverse ways to define music: I have adopted the definition of “organised sound” (Varèse and Wen-Chung 1966, p.18) over time. Music is a time-based art-form composed and usually expressed in writing. This encompasses whatever kind of written form the composer chooses to utilise, including digital means. Video art is a time-based artistic form of expression as well. By its very nature, video art relates to writing from its inception, when the electron beam “wrote” the video frames on magnetic support.

Audiovisual composition is here generally intended as intermedial composition with the use of the audiovisual medial form of expression as the carrier. Writing is a symbolic organisation and exposition of discourse. Composition predominantly belongs to writing practices, and I intend writing as the creative act of impressing a meaningful discourse on a medium. To compare music composition with filmic montage as a form of composition, Dziga Vertov stated that

“Montage means organising film fragments (shots) into a film-object. It means ‘writing’ something cinematic with the recorded shots” (Vertov quoted by Michelson 1984, p.xxix).

My practice-based research on audiovisual composition is grounded within an intermedial writing framework to explore novel compositional approaches that consciously use intermedial space through the integration of audio, video, music, remediated visual arts and films, and text-based media. My practice-based exploration seeks to offer novel opportunities for meaningful experiences for the audience within the intermedial space and to provide new insights into the intermedial audiovisual composition practice. As such, this research and practice experience can be valuable to composers active in the domain of audiovisual composition, to discover or explore intermedial thinking, and to musicologists and analysts active in the field of multimedia and audiovisual studies.

In this exegesis, the discussion of a Portfolio of six audiovisual compositions casts light on the creative process and the development of intermedial compositional strategies based on the application of the intermedial interference concept. The compositions’ sound properties are those of electroacoustic music with a *musique concrète* approach (Chion 1983, p.37). Computer technology is “used to access, generate, explore and configure sound material” (Emmerson and Smalley 2001). Visual imagery is always derived from real footage considered “*concrète visual material*” (Hyde 2012, p.172). Its properties are “abstracted” from reality and non-narrative as an assumption, i.e., no preconceived filmic storytelling informs their meaning and organisation over time. Therefore, the research aims to explore the boundaries, intersections, and the interference between moving images abstracted from reality and presented with different degrees of “surrogacy” (Smalley 1997, p.112) (but intended here only as the level of perceived detachment from the original source, i.e., “source bonding”, (ibid. p.110)), their intrinsic ambiguous narrativity, and electroacoustic music in an

intermedial creative context. The reflection upon the practice outcome (the compositions) informs this contextual document that gives an insight into what I refer to as intermedial audiovisual composition and its creative strategies. An autoethnographic approach is employed to present, contextualise, and critically discuss this practice-based research's creative process and findings.

1.2. The Research Question

The critical discussion and contextualisation presented in this exegesis illustrate how an electroacoustic music composer, used to producing acousmatic or live-electronics concert music, slowly became an audiovisual composer. The Portfolio project had a specific trajectory to develop the correct compositional practice within the context of intermedial creativity and to find a possible answer to the main research question, which is:

How can the concept of intermedial interference be applied to create new audiovisual works?

However, another interwoven topic arose within the fabric of the research: that of balance. Interference can be either constructive or destructive; thus, this phenomenon can disrupt the composition discourse unexpectedly or result in a change of balance in the perception of the different elements within the work. During the compositional process, I realised that balance disruption—or change—occurs in the perceptual relationship between eyes and ears. This is related to my personal sensitivity concerning the process's complexity level. The disruption of balance leads to loss or overcharge of information and consequent loss of meaning and disengagement. Hence, a secondary question can be identified:

How can the concept of balance be used to inform emerging creative strategies?

Eventually, a third collateral question emerged as a final reflection concerning the general field of investigation, that of composition:

How has this inquiry changed or informed my understanding of audiovisual composition?

1.3. Definitions

1.3.1. Intermedial Interference

The concept of intermedial interference, central to this exegesis, necessitates a thorough examination. This exploration is crucial for understanding the proposed application in the context of audiovisual composition and for addressing the various connotations and preconceptions associated with the term.

It is helpful to consider the etymology of “interference”. There are two plausible interpretations of the word. One derives from the Latin “inter” (between) and “ferio” (I hit, strike; infinitive “ferire”) (Lewis and Short 1879), whereas the other originates from “inter” (between) and “fero” (I bear, carry, or bring; infinitive “ferre”) (ibid.). The second origin suggests a neutral process of interaction or transmission between elements rather than an inherently disruptive force. It also implies “to set in motion” (ibid., p.737) or “to bear, produce, yield” (ibid., p.738). Considering this second perspective, we can frame interference as a neutral and natural dynamic interplay and mutual influence phenomenon, setting the stage for my nuanced understanding of its role in intermedial contexts.

The concept of interference spans multiple disciplines, each offering valuable insights into its nature. In Physics,

“The combination of two or more electromagnetic waveforms to form a resultant wave in which the displacement is either reinforced or cancelled” (OED 2022).

This definition highlights the dual nature of interference, encompassing both constructive and destructive outcomes. Considering acoustic phenomena, interference “occurs when two (or more) waves add together” (Rossing 2014, p.220) in a propagation medium. The result of their combination can be either constructive or destructive (ibid.). In telecommunications, interference is intended as a disturbance introduced to the radio or television signals by electric equipment or other stations or channels (Seybold 2005). This usage tends to emphasise the potentially disruptive aspects of interference. In psychology studies, a reconceptualisation of the interference theory (Anderson 2003) proposes redefining interference stemming from systems that facilitate mental and behavioural control. In this proposal, interference does not have a negative connotation. Instead, it is seen as a natural

outcome of inhibitory control mechanisms that help us effectively direct our actions and thoughts. However, interference can become problematic when it is too strong or hinders the retrieval of target memories, leading to forgetting (ibid.). This cognitive perspective adds another layer to our understanding of how different elements can interact and influence each other. Another neutral connotation of the word interference concerns Metz's concept of "semiotic interferences" (1974), which I discuss later in this text (see par. 2.2, p.33).

Acknowledging that "interference" often carries negative connotations in everyday language, frequently associated with unwanted disruption, negative influence, or obstruction, is essential. These preconceptions can pose challenges when using the term in an academic or artistic context, particularly one that seeks to explore its constructive potential alongside its disruptive aspects.

In the context of this exegesis, intermedial interference is defined as the perceptual phenomenon arising from the interaction of media features in the intermedial space. This definition intentionally embraces both the constructive and potentially disruptive aspects of interference. Experiencing intermedial interference involves conceptual processing and symbolic and metaphorical interpretation of the perceptual phenomenon, providing a potentially meaningful encounter with a media artefact.

Interference can produce positive outcomes, such as a perceptual enhancement (like the amplitude summing of two phase-coherent soundwaves) and obstruction, disruption, or disturbance at the same time. For example, visual rhythm might synchronise with the pace of the music to create a heightened sense of rhythm. Destructive interference in this context is not necessarily negative. It can refer to instances where media features interactions create productive tension, challenge audience expectations, or deliberately obscure meaning to provoke deeper engagement. For example, misaligned audiovisual synchronisation might develop a sense of unease or highlight the disjunction between what is seen and heard.

It is essential to be aware that constructive and destructive interference can be simultaneous when dealing with a higher degree of complexity and unpredictability, bearing contradiction and blurring boundaries between diverse forms of expression. Metaphorically speaking, the interaction of different media in a multimedia form of expression produces a superimposition of significance conveyed by a variety of media features. Media have established characteristics or features that potentially bear meaning. Although the final intended meaning

could be common to the different media involved in the artefact, their different ways of representing or communicating it could further impact the reception. By framing intermedial interference this way, we move beyond the simplistic binary oppositions of positive or adverse effects. Instead, we open up a space for exploring the full spectrum of interactions between media features, acknowledging both the harmonious integrations and the productive tensions that can arise.

Developing my practice, it was natural to think and observe that sometimes balance, or re-balance, was needed to make the direction of a passage in a composition evident and clarify the sense of particular media interaction. In my compositions, everything occurs at the audiovisual level, where the perceptual relationship between vision and hearing is continuously affected by the interaction of the media and the consequent interference of their features. It has been essential as a composer, throughout the compositional process, to recognise when the media interact in unexpected or unintended ways and learn how to manage the balance of all this variety of media when the disruption introduced by destructive interference can challenge the reception of the artefact. Instead, intermedial interference can be constructive when it enhances the reception of potential meaning. Different media can constructively influence or shape each other. Without delving into semiotics, we can understand something when we juxtapose elements of the same category with their opposites.

“Where there is choice there is meaning, and the meaning of what was chosen is determined by the meaning of what was not” (Fiske 2011, p.55).

We know what something is because we know what it is not; using opposition creates dialectics in discourse, and meaning occurs when different elements are juxtaposed. This is relevant to considering and pursuing balance in an intermedial compositional context where the deliberate choice of one element instead of another can shape, change, or obfuscate the potential meanings.

Reflecting on interference, I am more interested in approaching complexity and arising contradictions than investigating the media features themselves. A taxonomy of media features as a way to understand complexity is not the scope of this research. Furthermore, the concept of intermedial interference—the interaction of different media features which occur in the intermedial space—either constructive or destructive, could be translated into practice through the intentional use of a variety of visual and audio interferences. This exegesis

discusses and explains how such intermedial interference has informed the making of the Portfolio's compositions.

1.3.2. Media Features

Intermediality is defined as a relation

“Between conventionally distinct media of expression or communication: this relation consists in a verifiable, or at least convincingly identifiable, direct or indirect participation of two or more media in the signification of a human artefact” (Wolfe 1999, p.37).

Therefore, intermediality concerns the relationship between two or more diverse media expressions. When these distinct medial forms of expression contribute to the creation of an artefact, their combination and integration produce intermedial interference through the interaction of their specific features. Therefore, intermedial interference plays an essential role in making sense of the artefact.

My definition of media features is an adaptation of Elleström's definition of “media characteristics” (2014, p.39-45). Elleström uses the term

“To denote all sorts of media traits associated with both form and content: structures, stories, rhythms, compositions, contrasts, themes, motifs, characters, ideas, events, moods, and so forth. All the things that can be represented by a medium, in the broad sense of being made present to the perceiver's mind, are media characteristics” (Elleström 2017, p.511).

I refer to *media features* as *the all-encompassing, expressive traits related to form and content at macro and microstructural levels*, diverting from Elleström's definition that seems to describe a more overarching framework, not considering details that can be significant at the compositional level. All the expressive attributes that can be conveyed through a medium in the expansive sense of making them accessible to the observer's intellect through sensory experience are considered features of that medium.

1.3.3. Balance

According to Arnheim (1974, p.19), balance within the arts can be described as

“The state in which the forces acting upon a body compensate one another. In its simplest form, balance is achieved by two forces of equal strength that pull in opposite directions. The definition is applicable to visual balance.”

Balance in art refers to attaining a state of equilibrium, stability, or harmony through the proper distribution of elements in a work (DeWitte et al. 2023). In the audiovisual arts, it can refer to the distribution of sonic and visual elements in a composition so that no one part overpowers or dominates any other part (Evans 2005). It implies a harmonious configuration or proportion between opposing or different components, ensuring that none overwhelm the others. Achieving balance often involves a dynamic process of adjustment and adaptation to maintain stability in the face of changing conditions.

Balance is crucial in various art-forms. For instance, a composer may use balance in a musical piece to establish contrast and a sense of tension between different parts. Similarly, an artist in audiovisual art may use balance to create a harmonious relationship between the visual and auditory elements. By comprehending the diverse forms of balance and the strategies to attain them, artists can produce appealing and harmonious works of art.

Balance in art also refers to how the elements within a composition are arranged and structured (Bowers 1999). It involves principles like symmetry, asymmetry, unevenness, weight distribution, equilibrium, harmony, and proportion (Wong 1993). Judging balance is a skill I learned through experiencing diverse works of art. Over time, I observed that people can generally develop a conceptual category for balance, which allows us to assess the level of balance in a new artwork and compare it to other artworks we have experienced. Based on my experience and practice, I consider the concept of balance in the arts a perceptual category that falls under the broader category of visual aesthetics and composition. Colour, shape, line, texture, space, and weight contribute to our perceptual impression of balance. To a certain extent, the categorization of balance can depend on subjective aesthetic and visual taste. Artists use balance as an expressive tool in their work to avoid instability (Arnheim 1974); otherwise, “under conditions of imbalance, the artistic statement becomes incomprehensible” (ibid., p.20).

In summary, balance can be seen as a perceptual category centring on the visual and auditory impression of equilibrium, stability, and evenness within an artistic composition. It emerges from our perceptual faculties, allowing us to judge equilibrium in art. Balance is a critical element in creating stability and coherence within visual art (Arnheim 1974).

1.3.4. Audiovisual vs Audio-visual

Understanding the term audio-visual versus audiovisual is a matter of debate among scholars and practitioners due to the ambiguity of interpretation and its contextualisation. In her “Composing Audiovisually” (2021), Harris conducts a thorough investigation on this topic, including it as part of a more comprehensive survey, the outcomes of which are included in the publication. A minority of the surveyed participants associated the term audiovisual with the technology, equipment, or the technical aspects of a media work involving both image and sound. For this reason, other participants prefer to use the term audio-visual, differentiating it from the technology and interpreting it as an artistic practice. Furthermore, “several participants felt the term audiovisual was only meaningful if accompanied by a qualifying term or designation” (Harris 2021). It is clear that theoreticians and practitioners need further qualification; depending on what attribute follows the audiovisual term, a wide range of possibilities are open to its contextualisation (Harris 2021).

From my point of view, reflecting on the way the combined word “audio-visual” is spelt, I would argue that the two terms, united by the hyphen, give the reader the impression of two different and separated worlds bridged in the technological domain: the audio technology and the video technology contribute to the production of a generic audio-visual artefact.

In the last few years, I have always preferred to spell it in English and Italian, my native language, without using the hyphen. This is because joining the two terms that form the word in a unique and “fused” locution gives a better idea of a concept encompassing a creative process, a media artefact, and a sensory experience. This aligns with my intermedial approach to audiovisual composition: the two words that form the expression are conceptually fused. Supporting my stance, most of Harris’s survey participants state that the single word audiovisual is preferred to the other spelling. Moreover, the term is undoubtedly “understood and appropriate” to define an experience that “involve(s) both hearing and seeing simultaneously in a single work” (Harris 2021).

However, I still employ the term “audio-visual” when discussing concepts presented by other authors who use the word with a hyphen in their publications to refer to an artistic form of expression or a technology.

1.3.5. Non-narrative

In the development of this research project, my approach to audiovisual composition, especially concerning visual material, is substantially non-narrative and somewhat abstract, or “abstracted” from reality, as a formal assumption.

At this point, it is worth defining what I intend for non-narrative, as opposed to narrative audiovisual work. I draw my definition from the research field of film studies, although the distinction between the two different aesthetics is difficult and can be rather vague. The definition of a non-narrative audiovisual work or film can be ambiguous and unclear. Non-narrative film is a form of experimental cinema with no storytelling or reference to actual facts (Aumont et al. 1992). However, it is easier to define completely abstract films as non-narrative; that is to say, neither storytelling nor acting is present.

A non-narrative audiovisual product does not rely on fictional storytelling for developing its formal structure and organisation of materials, whereas “narrating consists of relating an event, whether real or imaginary” (Aumont et al. 1992, p.70). In a non-narrative audiovisual work, there is no predetermined storytelling in the form of a storyboard or fictional script. This aesthetic approach is usually found in experimental and avant-garde cinema that makes use of non-representational imagery, although an abstract film can “still retain a number of narrative characteristics” (ibid., p.71). On the other hand, non-representational and non-narrative features can be found in narrative films.

Even abstract or “abstracted” from reality moving images, with their colours, shapes, and lines, can create subjective meta-narratives for the audience. According to Aumont et al. (1992), a moving image represents an object in a continuous transformation, allowing us to witness its progression from one stage to another within the temporal dimension.

Therefore, abstract moving images subjected to compositional techniques such as accumulation, multiplication, acceleration and deceleration of movement, and fragmentation can give “the spectator the impression of a logical [narrative] development before necessarily inserting an ending or resolution” (Aumont et al. 1992, p.71). Moreover, in the case of this

project, the deliberate use of ambiguous and organic moving images that are “abstracted” and processed from camera-sourced material can suggest and favour the audience to unfold multiple, non-linear, and subjective meta-narratives.

What is argued so far finds its ground in Garro’s reasonings about visual music and mimetic visual music. He states that visual music “would typically consider works that are non-narrative but not necessarily non-representational” (Garro 2012, p.104) and that he regards mimetic visual music

“As a time-based art, which utilises recognisable sounds and recognisable moving images purely as means for artistic expression” (Garro 2015, p.3).

He recognises that camera-sourced footage and real sound recordings

“Inevitably shift the artefact towards much more powerful and ubiquitous mediatic experiences, such as cinematography” (ibid.).

These materials function as attractors; they create a “force field” that “is nearly impossible to elude”, and “*Narrative* is the inescapable source of this attraction” (ibid.). However, he also claims that if

“Composers wish to escape the irresistible pull of cinematographic narrativity, they can rely on a wealth of strategies to progressively remove materials from their causal bonding, so they can be more flexibly arranged in meta-narratives” (Garro 2014a, p.1).

Furthermore, Hyde (2012), debating about “visual suspension”, points out a potential problem for the audiovisual composer, which is image recognisability. Our audiovisual experience is highly influenced by “the context of narrative cinema and television”, where there is a “very narrow range of accepted relationships between sound and image” (ibid., p.174). “Visual suspension” might be a way to liberate the visual material from the limited and socially established audiovisual relationships associated with cinema and television. This disconnection “might make available new audiovisual relationships within the context of visual music” (ibid., p.174). Hyde poses that “visual suspension” is “generally facilitated through abstraction” and observes that “the vast majority of visual music works are broadly abstract in terms of their visual language” (ibid., p.174).

Therefore, the compositions, the final result of this project, are non-narrative as a formal assumption, but that does not mean that non-linear meta-narratives cannot emerge from the artefacts (Mumford 2009), primarily as the consequence of the use of visual material originated from organic and camera-sourced material. My practice is largely situated on the ambiguous border between the objective representation and the abstraction of reality, between mimesis and the aural/visual “absolute” perception.

1.3.6. Synchrony

My audiovisual composition method comprises two different approaches in devising the synchronic relationship between a moving image, visual gesture, and musical sound. I have been intuitively and unconsciously developing this approach from the very beginning of my audiovisual practice, which can be traced back to the composition of the collaborative piece *Falling* (Chiaramonte and Cirulli 2011). This method significantly considers the perceptual phenomenon of synchresis (Chion 1994), deriving from the deliberate creative choices implemented by the composer about synchronising sound and a visual gesture.

I call the first typology of synchrony *Primary Synchronisation Point (PSP)*.

A PSP is specifically designed to underline an audiovisual gesture and place an event in the foreground. It usually occurs on a shot cut and could be compared to a musical accent. A PSP is generally conceived as an integral part of the composition project and carries an intentional meaning within the structure and general form of the composition. A PSP can be visually driven when the visual leads the creative process regarding synchrony; the perceptual attention is primarily focused on the imagery. On the other hand, a PSP can be musically driven when the musical gesture leads to the creation of synchrony; the perceptual attention is primarily focused on the music.

A *Secondary Synchronisation Point (SSP)* occurs by chance and usually during a shot, not at a shot cut. In my experience, this has happened quite often. During a detail-focused revising of an audiovisual passage, the attention of the composer is suddenly attracted by an unplanned audiovisual synchronous event, which joins together a visual gesture and a musical gesture. The SSP is not always exact; however, it is possible to achieve the desired effect using micro audio editing and detailed mixing techniques. Usually, the visual is left untouched in this process; instead, the musical sounds can be adapted. This process can also be regarded as the

audiovisual application of a well-known electroacoustic and acousmatic music compositional technique where the typo-morphological features of the sound objects suggest to the composer how to compose them. The structure of the piece could also change and evolve accordingly.

The act of a concentrated and repeated audiovision of a short passage of the piece can be compared to the Schaefferian “reduced listening” (Schaeffer 1966) applied to the audiovisual compositional process. Hyde (2012, p.173) defines this as “visual suspension”.

To write means to construct language, not to explain it.

Max Bense (1962)

2. Literature and Contextual Review

2.1. Introduction

From a general point of view, the foundation of this research concerns visual music as a form of art film in which the musical compositional processes relating to melody, harmony, rhythm, and counterpoint are used to control both the audio and visual materials and to compose an audiovisual artwork (Moritz 1999).

As thoroughly investigated by McDonnell (2020), visual music can be found in an extensive range of artistic practices across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries concerning visual arts, avant-garde cinema, video art, and electroacoustic music.

The practice element of the proposed research is a form of electroacoustic audiovisual composition, part of the more comprehensive family of visual music (Hill 2010a). Andrew Hill, adapting Simon Emmerson and Denis Smalley's definition of electroacoustic music (Emmerson and Smalley 2001), defined an electroacoustic audio-visual music work as:

“A cohesive entity in which audio and visual materials are accessed, generated, explored and configured [...] in the creation of a musically informed audio-visual expression. Electroacoustic audio-visual music works explore the possibilities that the combination of their two time-based media (sound and moving image) allow” (Hill 2010a).

The research in audiovisual composition is multidisciplinary, combining many artistic-related disciplines, creating a vast context of research and practices about electroacoustic music and moving image relationship, intermediality, visual music, film sound theory and practice, avant-garde cinema, visual arts, video art, and film music.

Starting from my initial investigation, I conducted an extensive literature review on theoretical studies and practice-based experiences. Although the general context has always been electroacoustic and audiovisual composition, the specific fields of practice and investigation have differed. I found little about audiovisual composition with electroacoustic music and intermediality. I noticed that even less had been addressed about the outcome of media interaction and intermedial interference in the intermedial space, both in theory and practice. Therefore, this literature and contextual review gives the reader an overview of what

is relevant to my inquiry and has been written and produced in the field. Furthermore, where possible and appropriate, I will address the research gap concerning the novel concept of intermedial interference I am proposing. This literature and contextual review informed my practice and the production of my Portfolio of compositions.

2.2. Intermediality

This practice-based research explores the context of electroacoustic audiovisual composition from the perspective of an intermedial arts approach. Differently from multimediality, intermediality does not refer to media work in itself. Multimediality is about combining, integrating, and converting multiple media into a common delivery format. Since the late 2000s, the digital format has become a common and diffuse delivery format. Meaning can be conveyed in many traditional or innovative ways, but usually, there is always a medium that dominates and leads the discourse in the artefact. Cinema, and audiovisual arts in general, are mainly multimedia art forms where different media, such as moving images, music, sound, and text, combine to produce a work whose fruition delivers meaning to the audience through enjoyment and emotional involvement. In multimedia art-forms, particularly in audiovisual media, there is an apparently predominant medium; according to Chion (1994, p.143), “the screen remains the focus of attention.” This is not to say that any of the involved media is more important than another. As Chion (2017 cited by Fairfax 2017) states, they are “an ensemble of sound and images” since there is a reciprocal influence.

On the other hand, intermediality refers to relationships between medial elements within a media work; it is not about the media artefact but the compositional process and the relationship established between the different medial materials at the compositional stage. Intermedia artworks differ from multimedia productions because the materials involved in creating these artefacts “are ‘conceptually’ fused rather than merely juxtaposed” (Vos 1997, p.325). However, a multimedia production can display intermedial characteristics.

This research represents a practice-based investigation into audiovisual creativity, where music, and more generally, the soundtrack, concurs with creating original audiovisual works. These artefacts expand the boundaries of the research into intermediality, where the combination and the inextricable bonding of different media contribute to the creation and signification of the whole audiovisual product (Rajewsky 2005). This further clarifies why I define my artistic production as “audiovisual” rather than “audio-visual” (as discussed in par.

1.3.4, p.23). “Audiovisual” concerns the combination, integration, and fusion of two or more medial forms of expression in an intermedial perspective. In contrast, the latter refers to the more traditional multimedia form.

The term intermedia was first used in the mid-1960s by Dick Higgins as an attempt to distinguish so-called “intermedia” works from “mixed media” and “multimedia” ones (Rajewsky 2005). However, Higgins draws inspiration from Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1812), citing the poet and his use of the term “intermedium”, which referred to the definition of narrative allegory as something that falls between person and personification. Higgins interprets Coleridge in his 1981 addendum to “Intermedia” (Higgins and Higgins 2001), stating that the poet uses the term in its contemporary sense, that is, “to define works which fall conceptually between media that are already known” (ibid., p.52).

Rajewsky (2005, p.51) categorised further and defined intermediality, proposing a classification with three subcategories which can refine the meaning in terms of “medial transposition”, “media combination”, and “intermedial references”. Electroacoustic audiovisual composition, if exhibiting intermedial attributes, falls in the intermedial quality of the second category—media combination—which is determined by the process of “combining at least two conventionally distinct media or medial forms of articulation” (Rajewsky 2005, p.52). In her definition:

“Two media or medial forms of articulation are each present in their own materiality and contribute to the constitution and signification of the entire product in their own specific way” (Rajewsky 2005, p.52).

The possibilities inherent in this category range:

“From a mere contiguity of two or more material manifestations of different media to a ‘genuine’ integration, an integration which in its most pure form would privilege none of its constitutive elements” (ibid., p.52).

Intermediality depicts the quality of phenomena that “have to do in some way with a crossing of borders between media” (Rajewsky 2005, p.50). The constitutive medial forms become nearly inseparable in the latest form of a combination of different medial forms of articulation.

“Media combinations concerns phenomena in which individual media or their material manifestation [...] become inextricably bound to, or even ‘merged’ with, one another, and as such ‘are simultaneously and oscillatingly present’” (Rajewsky 2005, p.52 quoting Hansen-Löve 1983).

Reflecting on Rajewsky’s statement about the “purest form” of integration, which does not privilege any of the medial forms of expression involved in an intermedial artefact, the connection with the idea of balance I am developing from a practice point of view was straightforward. Hill (2010a, p.2) quickly touches on balance when he concisely defines an electroacoustic audio-visual music work as “organised sound and image”. In note n.7 of the same paper, he gives us an in-depth explanation of his definition, observing the

“Use of *and* to designate the equal balance between sound and image within an electroacoustic audio-visual music work as opposed to the use of the word *with* which might designate or suggest the primacy of one element over the other” (Hill 2010a).

However, these definitions of balance are more on the theoretical side than the practical. What is involved in the process of balancing the media contributing to an audiovisual artefact at the compositional stage is not clear from these definitions. How can we apply balance? What can disrupt balance? Is the disruption of balance a consequence of media interaction that causes destructive intermedial interference?

According to Spielmann (2001), intermedial artwork, specifically in visual media, is defined by the collision, exchange, transformation, and merging of “elements that come from different media” (Spielmann 2001, p.59). Therefore, “content becomes a formal category”, “transformation becomes a structural category” (that refers to the connection and merging of different media to create a new form), and intermediality itself is “a formal category of exchange” (Spielmann 2001, p.59); this refers to an aesthetic combination of both form and content.

“The related meaning of content is to express such modes of transformation that are effected by the collision of painting and film, of film and electronic media, and so on” (ibid., p.59).

Zecca (2008) discusses in-depth the notion of intermediality in film studies. He thoroughly analyses Metz's concept of "semiotic interferences" (Metz 1974, p.212) between language systems. He also discusses the similarity of some expressive traits that can be found in different media, which participate in a mechanism he defines as "intermedial exchange" (Zecca 2008, p.42). Elaborating on his idea, visual arts, cinema, and music can share, for instance, a common feature: rhythmic patterns. Although these media have different and specific ways to integrate this feature in their expressive language, it is possible to create intermedial interference because "a large fragment of a system appears in two or more language systems in a more or less homologous form" (Metz 1974, p.215). This interference can produce different and new modalities of fruition, perceptual experience, and knowledge.

In an interview with Maggi (2014), Valerio Murat and Antonio Poce, members of Hermes Intermedia, discussed their field of artistic practice where a

"Strategia compositiva capace di controllare contestualmente tutti i materiali (di qualsiasi origine sensoriale) ed integrarli in un solo processo creativo" (Maggi 2014).

English translation of quote:

"Compositional strategy contextually controls the whole of the materials (of any sensory origin) and integrates them into a unique creative process."

This strategy and approach employ the "scrittura intermediale" ("intermedial writing") as a creative process where different media features and expressive languages integrate themselves into what Valerio Murat and Antonio Poce (Maggi 2014) refer to as "visioni simultanee" ("simultaneous visions").

The late Morricone (2019), in his article "Le scritture inclusive di Hermes Intermedia" ("The inclusive writings of Hermes Intermedia"), says about the Italian collective:

"Il loro merito è proprio questo: aver elaborato una tecnica compositiva in grado di comprendere, nel medesimo contesto, materiali e figure di provenienza diversa [...] e di integrare tutto in un solo progetto creativo" (Morricone 2019, p.10).

English translation of quote:

“Their merit is precisely this: they developed a compositional technique that can include, in the same context, materials and figures from different sources [...] and integrates everything into a single creative project.”

Returning to a practice perspective, employing this intermedial compositional strategy, we can explore the interaction, combination, mutual influence, and interconnection between music and the moving image in a time-based medial form of expression. The intermedial creative process generates a network of evocations and suggestions that reassemble music, video footage, body and voice, visual arts, and poetry.

2.3. Narrative, Narrativity, Meaning, and Interpretation

In the Portfolio’s compositions, visual materials are abstracted from reality, sometimes abstract and non-representational, drawing inspiration from forms of visual film artworks that approach and exploit the audiovisual relationships in the absence of filmic storytelling. However, as stated in the definitions paragraph (see par. 1.3.5, pp.26), non-linear meta-narratives can emerge from the final artefacts (Mumford 2009) using visual material from organic and life-like filming.

2.3.1. Mumford’s Meta-Narrative

To clarify these concepts, I refer to what Mumford states in his contribution about visual music:

“A hyper-narrative or meta-narrative is essentially a collection of small story pieces designed to be arranged in many different ways or to tell many linear stories from different points of view and it follows the logic of a reverse deconstruction process” (Mumford 2009, p.158).

And furthermore:

“We can produce non-linear narratives that can be presented in a multitude of different orders, from different perspectives, in different locations, to give very different meanings” (ibid., p.159).

Mumford's rendering of the term then differs from the postmodern interpretation as the mother of all narratives that give sense to our historical events based on a universal knowledge provided by religious, political, and social doctrines (Lyotard 1979).

In the field of audiovisual composition and mimetic visual music, Garro (2014a, p.1) defines meta-narratives as “audio-visual-stories *about* stories”, and Wood (2017, p.8) contributes to the discussion, saying that meta-narrative

“Can be defined as the potential overall narrative consequences of the ordering and structuring of different visual and sonic material with mimetic potential, i.e., material that has potential to evoke images in the mind of the audience, potentially provoking the search for narrative meaning in the material.”

I understand meta-narratives as *small fragments of intertwined and multi-layered story clues, subjectively made up and interpreted by the spectator*; they are, as such, yet unrealised and even unknown in their meaning.

2.3.2. Eco's Open Work

As a consequence of the layering of multiple narratives, this practice-based investigation can in some way be seen related to the concept of open work discussed by Eco (1962, p.4), who states that:

“Every reception of a work of art is both an interpretation and a performance of it because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective for itself.”

It is well established that the audiovision, through the synchronisation of sound/music and moving images, elicits wonder, which consequently leads to the “suspension of criticality” (Deutsch 2008, p.95), or “suspension of disbelief”, as Kalinak (2010, p.26) refers to it, considering the spectator's acceptance of the untrue reality conveyed by the “larger-than-life images” (ibid., p.27) projected on the screen. The audiovisual artefacts produced and investigated in this research are open to interpretation and tend to promote reflectiveness and curiosity in the audioviewer¹. Therefore, this could be read as the attitude to the fruition of a cinematic work that is open because

¹ Drawing from Chion's (1994) concept of “audio-vision”, this term renders a member of the audience engaged in a unified perceptual experience. It has already been used in the academic context by Harris (2020).

“It proposes a wider range of interpretive possibilities, a configuration of stimuli whose substantial indeterminacy allows for a number of possible readings, a ‘constellation’ of elements that lend themselves to all sorts of reciprocal relationships” (Eco 1962, p.84).

2.3.3. Smalley’s Narrativity

Moving the discussion to sound, many theoreticians and scholars debated the nature of narrative in music over the years, particularly in electroacoustic and acousmatic music. Music, and the experience of it, is considered narrative because it unfolds in the temporal domain. Generally speaking, most people experience life as a succession of events which cause the multi-sensorial perception of reality and its emotional content: a sequence of images, “frames”, stored in our memory. Because of this mechanism, we continuously make up stories and narratives based upon our perception of reality. The pace of our breathing and our heartbeats conduct our lives physiologically, subconsciously, and psychologically. Furthermore, recorded real-world and organic sounds bear with them imagery elicited by the gesture, the “energy-motion trajectory which excites the sounding body” (Smalley 1997, p.111) and the remembered image of the source.

Smalley (1997, p.113) states that “gestural music [...] is governed by a sense of forward motion, of linearity, of narrativity.” Gestural behaviours in music impart to the audience a clear perception of the flow of time. Smalley specifically refers to “narrativity”, a more abstract concept than “narrative”. Musical gestural behaviours that push forward the perception of time elicit expectation in the audience, giving it a sense of an evolving “narrativity” that yet does not illustrate the unfolding of a story (a narrative plot). In my interpretation, “narrative” refers to *the way and the order in which the events are presented and arranged to convey meaning in a story*, whilst “narrativity” refers to *the structural features, processes, and narrative potentiality that sound can have in enabling storytelling*.

2.3.4. Andean’s Acousmatic Narrative

Andean (2010, 2012, 2014, 2016) investigates narrative in acousmatic music extensively. He states, “acousmatic music is an inherently narrative art form” (Andean 2016, p.192). He says music is generally experienced as a narrative expressive art form, reporting vast literature on the subject. However, he states that acousmatic music is more deeply narrative than other

music in general because of our perceptual response to it for the associations we make with the real-world sound sources; this is true also when the sound is more abstract due to the processing of the original real sound and the consequent higher degree of surrogacy (Andean 2016). Another essential concept is that he interprets narrative at the experiential level, “as a function of the act of reception” (Andean 2016, p.192), not “as a function of the work itself” (ibid.), therefore, on the esthetic side of the Nattiez (1990) continuum, not intended as poietic narrative, something the composer intentionally planned at the compositional stage. However, he admits that “narrative is a slippery term, ranging from narrower definitions [...] to the broadest definitions” (Andean 2016, p.192). His proposal of “narrative modes” (ibid.) is an essential advancement in acousmatic music studies. However, as explained above, even though it is clear that in my production, the development of narratives is undoubtedly entailed and far more enhanced by the presence of the visual media, I consider those narratives independent from any preconception or compositional plan aimed at storytelling and open to interpretation. I would instead consider them the result of the intrinsic narrativity of the medial form of expressions employed in the compositions.

2.3.5. Amelides’ Acousmatic Storytelling

Considering narrative as the unfolding of a plot in a more cinematic approach, it is worth mentioning the work of Amelides (2016) on Acousmatic storytelling. He introduces his novel concept by stating that his purpose

“Is to explore the idea of relating storytelling with acousmatic music in the creation of a hybrid vehicle for transmitting stories” (Amelides 2016, p.213).

He delineates a lineage for acousmatic storytelling, drawing from past compositional experiences such as those of Ferrari, Westerkamp, and Young, to name a few.

Amelides’ works are indeed cinematic and dramatic, and narrative is a “function of the work itself” (Andean 2016, p.192); it is a poietic narrative. He presents his compositional methodology, “Derived from the exploration of the synergy between storytelling techniques and acousmatic tradition” through the integration of “archival/historical sound materials, interviews, abstract sound materials, transformed sounds and referential sounds” (Amelides 2016, p.213).

The voice, especially the narrator's, plays a leading role in his compositions. I relate this to Chion's concept of cinema as a vococentric art, "the presence of a human voice instantly sets up a hierarchy of perception" (Chion 1999, p.5).

2.3.6. Young's Sound Images

Young acknowledges the increasing "role of imagery in electroacoustic music" (Young 2007, p.25). Young relates this increased attention and awareness about sonic imagery in acousmatic music to today's easy availability of recording and reproduction technology, which he considers "a transparent packaging (transportation) system" (ibid., p.32) that supports us to make meaning while recognising sounds. He also focuses on the importance of audio manipulation and transformation techniques in generating sonic imagery. Young introduces his concept of the "sound image", which is "a conceptual tool which unites those sounds which are distinctly referential and those with a remote relationship to reality" (ibid., p.32). This concept allows us to investigate both referential and more abstract sounds through their physical features and create associations, hence generating mental images. He reflects on the production of meaning as originating from the juxtaposition of real-world and unreal sounds. As I previously mentioned, meaning often occurs when contrasting elements of the same category are juxtaposed (par. 1.3.1, p.20). He also refers to the possible ambiguity of a conclusive meaning, leaving the sound and its sonic image—a figment of our aural imagination—open to interpretation. His stance aligns with the ambiguity of definitive meaning in the intermedial audiovisual domain, the openness to interpretation, and the development of potential meta-narratives in the Portfolio's compositions I referred to previously (par. 2.3, p.34 and par. 2.3.2 p.35).

Drawing from this reflection on his practice and writings, I conceived that there could be a consequentiality, a pattern, in how we experience sound, the imagery our creative mind produces, which develops multiple, non-linear, and subjective meta-narratives. This could be even more articulated and complex when we move from acousmatic to audiovisual music.

Sound is first experienced; it is a matter of perception. Therefore, a sound could first draw out images through the sonic structure and the referential meaning the sound carries concerning the source bonding. If the source is uncertain, we tend to create associations with illusory figures and forms. Despite Schaeffer's efforts to limit the perceptual experience of sound to reduced listening—to the sound object—and not consider the sound source bonding,

in acousmatic music, the primary use of environmentally sourced sounds, which carry a reference to their original context, elicits our audiovisual imagination:

“Sound has strong potential to evoke its real-world origins and that this has a potential structural role in the genre” (Young 2007, p.25).

Secondly, with its spectromorphological features and referentiality (what Young calls “referential meaning”), sound possesses intrinsic narrativity due to its structural characteristics (what Young calls “sonic structure”); thirdly, the sound image, as the last step, could eventually contribute to unfolding potential narratives.

Steering now the attention to intermedial audiovisual practice, the combination of sounds abstracted from reality and subjected to different degrees of manipulation and the moving image can create an even broader imaginative universe. Sounds and images interact in the intermedial space, creating intermedial interference. For example, the composer can control the type and degree of interference, integrating contrasting sonic and visual imagery elements on purpose. This compositional strategy can create a strong contraposition, and clash of meaning, when an explicit sonic image with a clear referentiality is merged with a moving image with a conflicting referentiality.

2.4. Audiovisual Composition (as Intermedial Audiovisual Composition)

Audiovisual composition includes an extensive context of practices and requires further qualification in order to identify a more specific area of creative and theoretical activity. At the beginning of my research, I approached the subject widely and explored diverse academic and artistic production sources to lay a solid foundation for my knowledge. Simultaneously, I searched for specific studies concerning the main area of my investigation, which is audiovisual composition within an intermedial context. The broad initial approach was vital to realise and assess the genuine lack of research about my specific intermedial approach to audiovisual composition practice and the concept of intermedial interference I was developing concurrently. I reviewed seminal texts that have been published since the early 2000s. Among them is the recent book by Harris, “Composing Audiovisually: Perspectives on Audiovisual Practices and Relationships” (2021), possibly representing the most comprehensive publication from a single author in the field. My literature and contextual review section on audiovisual composition narrows the argumentation to authors who

influenced my reflection and whose concepts informed my practice. Furthermore, sources covering audiovisual composition with any theoretical or practical relationships with intermediality are critically discussed, whether overtly declared or implied. The aim of this review revolves around the novel concept of intermedial interference and its application as a practice tool and compositional strategy in a creative audiovisual context.

2.4.1. Von Rüdiger and Rhythm

Von Rüdiger (2020), in “Rhythm as the intermediary of audiovisual fusions”, proposes a novel approach to analysing the audiovisual relationship using the equation “ $A + V = AV + x$ ” (von Rüdiger 2020, p.65).

The author suggests that the combined effect of audio (A) and video (V) objects can be described by the term AV, which represents audiovisual Gestalt. The equation further emphasises this relationship, with x meaning what the author refers to as “the remainder”. This implies that there is some additional component or factor (x) that contributes to the overall perceptual experience beyond the simple additive combination of audio and visual objects.

It is crucial that in the paper’s introduction, he states that in an audiovisual environment, “the unification of audio and video can be described as a fusion” (ibid., p.65). This definition sets the perspective that it is indeed intermedial, as the term fusion is familiar to many definitions of intermediality and the way the medial forms involved get together.

In analysing and studying audiovisual relationships, von Rüdiger identifies rhythm as the primary “tool of inquiry” (ibid., p.66). He realises that “rhythm possesses intermodal relationships, addresses all sensory organs and can be seen as a general quality” (ibid., p.66). Rhythm has the power to establish intermedial relationships. Rhythm is perceived both aurally and visually; it can support the connection and fusion of audio and visual media with its patterns because it possesses intermodal qualities that can be perceived through different features in time and space. This connects with my reflections stemming from Zecca (2008) and Metz (1974) (see par. 2.2, p.33). In his conclusion, he recalls the equation at the foundation of his discussion and says that he

“Would be greatly pleased if X was further reflected upon and the implied questions of intermediality confronted by my fellow practitioners” (von Rüdiger 2020, p.78).

His framework suggests that the perceptual experience is not solely determined by the individual audio and visual components but also by how they interact and integrate with each other. AV captures the combined effect, while the x represents any additional factors or complexities in the perceptual process. Overall, the equation and the author’s explanation provide a conceptual framework for understanding the integration of audio and visual stimuli in perception. That x, the remainder, might be seen in some way related to intermedial interference and its perceptual outcome. However, I find it challenging to reduce the argument to an algebraic equation, even though it is non-linear. We are dealing with perception and not something in the quantitative domain. Perception is a multidimensional and highly nuanced process that involves various cognitive, sensory, and psychological factors. It encompasses subjective experiences, contextual influences, and individual differences, which cannot be fully captured by an equation. Additionally, although the equation can provide a structured illustrative representation, it may not encompass all potential aspects of perceptual processing, including higher-order cognitive functions, emotional responses, and individual differences in sensory processing.

2.4.2. Cumming’s Intermedial Sonification

Cummings (2020) discusses his own electroacoustic musical compositions, inscribing them in the intermedial practice context, though from a different point of view, as his works are not audiovisual in the traditional sense; they do not display visual elements directly. Introducing his practice intents, he discusses the hierarchical relationship between the visual and the sound in conventional audiovisual works, where

“Even when the relationship is nominally equal, it is not uncommon for the visual to take precedence” (Cummings 2020, p.350).

The author uses creative sonification techniques of digital images to design autonomous musical works that are fundamentally shaped in their overall structure and musical details by an intermedial relationship with existing visual materials. This intermedial relationship is initially expressed through sonification (ibid.).

In his practice, he produces intermedial relationships that rely on mapping data from one media (visual) to another (music) in order to make a tight connection.

Cummings proposes a categorisation of sonification pertaining to the intermedial translation of “one discrete art form to another” (ibid., p.360) through intermedia movement. He also defines conversion as the “transformation of an image into sound data” (ibid., p.360). Concluding his article, the author reflects on the connection between the sounds and the images that contributed to the composition of his works. He states that without the image—not just invisible but possibly without any implied existence—these musical elements rise above their initial role as sonification of images. Instead, they transcend their visual origin to exist as music alone (ibid.).

Furthermore, he refers to Schaeffer (1966) and his concepts of “reduced listening” and “sound object”, creating an analogy with his idea of sound structure.

“Heard in their own right in this way, sonified images act as not so much a sound object as a sound structure. These structures help visualise, make tangible and articulate a composer’s large- and small-scale creative intentions, thereby becoming the basis for original, personal, and powerful works of sonic art” (Cummings 2020, p.361).

2.4.3. Kapuscinski’s Basic Theory

Kapuscinski’s (1997) “Basic Theory of Intermedia Composing with Sounds and Images” represents a seminal contribution to this field of practice and research. His contribution begins with a statement:

“My artistic premise is to compose structurally integrated intermedia works, in which sounds and images are given equal importance and are developed either simultaneously or in constant awareness of each other. I am particularly interested in working with narratives that emerge BETWEEN aural and visual layers” (Kapuscinski 1997, p.43).

He provides insight into intermedial composition, laying down a detailed theoretical approach concerning intermodal gestures, linking relationships, correspondences, perceptual strata,

counterpoint, and interdependent development. His theory is a solid starting point for investigating practice approaches and developing compositional strategies.

Kapuscinski argues that expressivity and direction are essential attributes to inform the compositional materials (i.e., sound and image). This gives the composer a chance to explore intermedial creativity.

“Musical motives or visual gestures may serve better this purpose than static elements because their motion can serve to effectively bridge the gap between media” (Kapuscinski 1997, p.43).

He continues his discussion, asserting that “if both elements are in motion, they may have a ‘common fate’ and consequently undergo integration” (ibid., p.43). Once again, rhythm, rhythmic patterns, and accents are at the centre of the discussion with what Kapuscinski calls “internal correspondences” (ibid., p.44).

Particularly interesting is the paragraph where “intermodal gestures” are defined:

“Sounds and images that are expressively charged and have clear direction can be linked to create an intermodal gesture. Such an object is not just a sum of aural and visual elements that constituted it but rather a perceptual intersection of the two. Through integration, it gains a new dimension” (Kapuscinski 1997, p.43).

The third dimension Kapuscinski refers to is a perceptual phenomenon recreated by the brain; awareness of this can add depth to the audiovisual experience. This recalls Chion and Varèse’s ideas simultaneously. It brings together Chion’s (1994) “added value” concept with Varèse’s (1967) “sound projection”, intended as a sonic spatial fourth dimension. However, I interpret Kapuscinski’s perspective as perceptually tri-dimensional, as in an actual spatial conception, because of the involvement of audio and visual materials composed “simultaneously or in constant awareness of each other” (Kapuscinski 1997, p.43).

After reflecting on Kapuscinski’s arguments about media “connections” and “correspondences”, I realised he proposes a method for establishing links between sound and images based on similarities in attributes and subsequently created correspondences. His creative process is related to my *Associative Mapping* strategy through media feature

similarities, which I will discuss later in this review. Kapuscinski (1997, p.44) also suggests that the “basic rule for linking sounds and images is temporal coincidence”. He goes on to explain that:

“The two participating elements do not have to start exactly together or be of equal duration but they need to happen in temporal proximity with some overlapping part which permits them to enter into a relationship of reference” (ibid., p.44).

I interpret Kapuscinski’s “temporal coincidence” as an audiovisual behaviour I refer to as *loose synchrony*, which is connected to the synchronisation method discussed in the definitions paragraph (see par. 1.3.6, p.26).

In his discussion on “linking”, Kapuscinski briefly touches upon a topic that is related to my intermedial interference concept. He suggests that

“Even an unlikely collision of sound and image can cause both of them to be evaluated with equal attention. It may even combat the usual dominance of sight over hearing” (ibid., p.45).

That “collision” refers to a successful linking caused by an unconventional association between sound and image. This has much to do with the result of an interaction that causes destructive interference; however, in doing so, it leads to a positive and enriching perceptual effect instead of a loss of meaning.

Of foremost importance is the assumption that in the compositional process, the development of the two—or more—medial forms of expression must be interdependent and “worked out in the constant presence of both layers” (ibid., p.46).

Furthermore, it is paramount in his conclusions that a

“Structurally integrated intermedia composition is not a genre in itself. It is a particular way of combining sounds and images that can be found in many genres” (Kapuscinski 1997, p.47).

And that a

“Structurally integrated intermedia composition as an aesthetic paradigm maybe one of the idiomatic artistic approaches to digital technology” (ibid., p.47).

2.4.4. Harris’s Audiovisual Thinking

In “Composing Audiovisually: Perspectives on Audiovisual Practices and Relationships” (2021), Harris begins her discourse by analysing the meaning of the word *composition* from an etymological perspective and reporting the numerous diverse contexts in which the word is used: from the arts to science. Harris points out its broader significance, which is “combining or putting together” (Harris 2021) different elements in order to create something new. The result of this activity and process—the compositional process—is an end product that is an artwork if we consider the context of artistic production. She thenceforth discusses the meaning of the word audiovisual, which is more difficult to define because of the ambiguity arising from the co-occurrence of the two different contexts involved, technological and experiential, where the audiovisual experience might not be considered as an independent perceptual category, but as a result of technological mediation (ibid.). However, she defines the meaning of the word audiovisual as an experience “specifically engaging both sight and hearing simultaneously” (ibid.), connecting this definition to that of her own audiovisual compositions as

“Work to be about the composition and combination of sounds and images within a single artwork [...] and for both the sound and image within the work to be an essential and integral part of both the conception and perception or reception of the work, that there be no sense of media hierarchy in how the perceptual components of the work exist together” (Harris 2021).

Harris expands the discourse on audiovisual composition to a broader and more general context that, according to her own will, should not be exclusively intended as (visual) music composition. This opens the argument to a broader analysis of the audiovisual relationship that encompasses the musical context but also goes beyond and allows me to investigate intermedial audiovisual composition specifically. Harris states that combining two media creates an effect greater than the sum of its parts, producing a third dimension, the audiovisual

space (ibid.). I would elaborate on her reflection by saying that the audiovisual experience happens in a perceptual space, a third dimension created by media combination. The audiovisual space (a perceptual space) is a sensory experience in which the combination, integration, and fusion of sound and image, hearing and seeing, create a synergic relationship. Such a close relationship shapes the audiovisual work, which is more significant than the sum of its parts. Therefore, the audiovisual space is then intermedial in nature. Intermedial interference involves creatively exploring the audiovisual space, hence, the intermedial space when referring to intermedial audiovisual composition.

Sound and image are conceived together and seem to belong to each other. Their relationship is not always obvious; however, the two components are always aware of each other and refer to one another. They are treated equally and considered at the same level; their successful interplay creates a balanced interaction. This does not imply that they always have the same expressive power. When one of them is highly charged with expressive power, the other can act in a way that seems less prominent. However, this behaviour is conscious and aims to create a counterbalance. Therefore, the discussion about balance is critical.

Harris (ibid.) focuses on balance extensively, reporting comments from her survey participants, who stress the argument by debating the extreme closeness of the relationship and integration between media. She also emphasises the balance from a compositional point of view when she states

“A constant awareness and consideration of the balance and coherence of the relationship between the two media, and, wherever possible, actively seeking to compose the two media together” (Harris 2021).

Harris (ibid.) introduces the concept of “thinking audiovisually”, which involves recognising the equal perceptual significance of the sound and visual elements in a work; she considers the sonic and visual elements of an audiovisual work as a unified whole rather than separate entities. “Thinking audiovisually” considers the multisensory and transperceptual experience; the author, when composing, thinks of sound and visuals as integral components of a unified organism.

I would transfer her idea to the context of audiovisual intermediality, recalling that already significant practitioners and theoreticians in the past thought about the fusion of sound, music,

and visuals in a more integrated way, not simply juxtaposing the two media in a multimedia fashion, but in some way investigating what happens between media and the creation of a third object resulting from their interaction. In Cinema, Eisenstein (1949), with his audio-visual montage, Vertov (1984) and Pelechian (1972), laid the foundation of what I would refer to as intermedial thinking or *thinking intermedially*, paraphrasing Harris's concept of "thinking audiovisually".

Harris's novel theoretical contribution to audiovisual composition studies is "transperceptual attention" and its inextricable bond with audiovisual synergy.

"Transperceptual attention – an apperceptive act in which I specifically attend to sight and sound and their interaction, and encounter other perceptual and contextual modes in light of that interaction" (Harris 2021).

Explaining that

"Encountering audiovisual works is not the same perceptual experience as listening to a sound work, or viewing a visual work, but is instead a transperceptual experience, rooted in both of its individual sensory modes yet also moving across, beyond and/or through the spaces between those modes and the effects those modes have on one another" (Harris 2021).

Furthermore, she provides an in-depth understanding of the relationship between sound and light and their simultaneity and inseparability in the audiovisual experience, explaining that they are vessels, not objects of our perception. We hear through sound as we see through light. We do not hear sound as we do not see light. Sound and light are the media of our perceptions, not the objects (ibid.).

Concluding my review of Harris's contribution, intermediality is discussed several times in various parts of her book. She critically engages with many authors in the intermedial domain, and shows her thinking and practice are aligned with an intermedial approach. I argue that research on audiovisual composition within the intermedial perspective is essential for creating better awareness and understanding of the whole subject and new knowledge.

The following paragraphs about the concrète and mimetic approaches and mapping strategies to audiovisual composition are necessary to discuss and better understand my origins as an

electroacoustic music composer and how these topics informed my practice as an intermedial audiovisual composer. More importantly, their discussion concerns how the sonic and visual materials are elaborated in the compositional process, and how processing approaches originally characteristic to acousmatic music are transferred and applied to both audio and visual media in this research.

2.4.5. The Concrète Approach

The visual material used in my audiovisual compositional practice is mostly drawn from organic and life-like filming. To contextualise my practice in the contemporary field of visual music and audiovisual composition, it is useful to define what I mean by “organic and life-like filming”. Hyde (2012), in his article “Musique Concrète Thinking in Visual Music Practice: Audiovisual Silence and Noise, Reduced Listening and Visual Suspension”, defines his own practice as an attempt to apply “ideas *unique to musique concrète*” (Hyde 2012, p.171) to visual music composition. He calls “concrète visual material” (ibid., p.172) a camera-sourced material. He also states that he processes this kind of material in a very similar manner to the way an electroacoustic music composer would treat his concrète sounds for composing a concrète music piece. In 1948, Pierre Schaeffer conceived the music genre he called “musique concrète” (Chion 1983, p.37).

The term *musique concrète* refers to a compositional approach that is not based on aprioristic abstract musical concepts but on concrète sound material. Concrète sound is a time-based audio material sourced from physical reality and recorded by means of an electroacoustic transducer. Composers in the studio isolate and separate the concrète sound from its source and put it under a “magnifier”; they observe and investigate its typological and morphological qualities. The result of this investigation on the concrète sound leads to consider it as an independent entity, the Schaefferian “sound object” (Chion 1983, p.37), and the potential musical qualities abstracted from it suggests to the composer a set of musical values and parameters useful for compositional purposes. The entire process concisely described here allows a way back to the music “through a *return to the concrète*” (ibid., p.37). Chion, in his “Guide to sound objects”, clearly explains what Pierre Schaeffer intended for “Abstract” and “Concrète”:

“Abstract and Concrète are ‘two isotopes of reality’, two faces of every perception, interdependent and complementary, which must be reconciled and balanced in music” (Chion 1983, p.37).

Therefore, what Hyde (2012, p.172) describes as “concrète visual material”, I would further clarify to be *time-based visual material sourced from physical reality and filmed by means of a camera* to match more closely with the definition of concrète sound. I use this terminology to refer to the kind of raw filmic material employed in my audiovisual works. Of course, this raw visual material might be processed to separate it from the referential source visually. The extent of manipulation allows us to achieve differing degrees of surrogacy, the *visual surrogacy* (extending Smalley’s 1997 concept of “gestural surrogacy” but intended as specified in par. 1.1, p.16), and also to consider the result of the processing as a “visual object” (Garro 2005, p.3). As the sound object is used as a primary compositional resource for the music, the visual object has the same function for the visual design. The nature of the moving image in my works is non-narrative and mostly non-representational, albeit not necessarily due to a possible low degree of visual surrogacy. The visual object’s qualities and features often suggest compositional strategies in a visual musique concrète fashion.

In his contribution, Hyde also proposes the novel concept of “visual suspension”, defining the term as “an ocular counterpart” to Schaeffer’s (1966) reduced listening. In elaborating on the visual suspension, he refers to the physical sound features of silence and noise to propose their visual correspondences as visual silence and noise. Focusing on visual silence, Hyde defines it as the ocular equivalent of acoustic silence, which is the absence of sound. Therefore, visual silence “might be defined as the absence of light – in other words, darkness, or black” (Hyde 2012, p.174).

Drawing only from his concept of visual silence, I would propose an additional term, *visual pause*, using a musical term as a reference; this definition better suits my thinking and my practice approach. Interpreting it as referring to physics/acoustics, visual silence belongs to the frequency domain, while visual pause belongs to the time domain. For example: an audiovisual artefact where, over a specific period of time, the visual elements present a motionless and uniformly coloured background without any articulated shapes or changes in colour might be considered a visual pause. Thus, the pause might be black but also white or any other colour. Hyde focuses on the fact that “most of the pixels are the same” (Hyde 2012,

p.175), and perceptually speaking, it is irrelevant whether they are black or white. I hold a differing stance from his statement as I argue that visually speaking, a “pause” (lack of musically organised sounds) or “silence” (absence of sound spectra) if presented with colour, might have a different perceptual effect on the viewer. That can also be dynamically connected in a complex and subtle way to a composition’s general discourse, design, and structure.

2.4.6. The Mimetic Approach

Garro has investigated the mimetic potential of visual music in his theoretical contributions and artistic practice over the years. He draws from Emerson (1986) and expands the concept of mimesis to that kind of audiovisual composition produced within the circle of electroacoustic music composers. The author argues that the electroacoustic music language is “intrinsically visual, even within its acousmatic paradigm” (Garro 2012, p.103) and states that

“Electroacoustic music carries within itself the seed of the journey that took it beyond the acousmatic, mono-mediatic paradigm. Visual music composers have, from their viewpoint, done nothing more than going one small step beyond” (ibid., p.105).

The concrete nature of sounds used in electroacoustic music, the source bonding, their mimetic characteristics, and the degree of manipulation they are usually subjected to shape the listeners’ perception, evoking images in their minds and eliciting narrativity.

When the moving image is part of an artwork designed by a composer from the acousmatic/electroacoustic tradition, the perceptual effect of such features applied to the visual can be even more powerful. According to Garro (2012; 2015), whose definition refers to Evans (2005), visual music includes artworks non-narrative in nature but not necessarily non-representational; most visual music repertoire is even visually abstract. What differentiates mimetic visual music from cinema is the absence of storytelling. Furthermore, he creates an analogy between the mimetic discourse in electroacoustic music, where the composers encourage “the listener to (re)create mental images from a complex web of personal and cultural references” (Garro 2014b, p.1), and the mimetic visual music which he, therefore, defines as

“The artistic practice of audio-video design in which a very similar process of reconstruction is encouraged, with the added facet that the data for such inference is now both aural and visible” (ibid., p.1).

Mimetic visual music relies on the combination of abstract and mimetic material, textural and gestural morphologies, both for the sound and the video, to convey artistic meaning and create a perceptual experience, which is “audio-visual poetry” (Piché 2003). He states that composers can deploy visual processing techniques to avoid the inevitable cinematic narrative pull when camera-sourced material is used. Sometimes, even a simple visual effect such as slow motion removes the moving image from the “inescapable source of this attraction” (Garro 2015, p.3).

However, the issue of filmic narrative should not be regarded as incompatible with audiovisual composition, avoiding it at all costs, especially from an intermedial perspective. I would promote, therefore, an in-depth interdisciplinary investigation and cross-pollination between cinema practice, theory, and audiovisual composition. Garro himself touches on this subject, stating that

“Mimetic Visual Music in particular, with its references to reality, is often contiguous to strands of abstract non-narrative cinematography and can, and probably should, be examined also from the angle of film theory” (Garro 2014a, p.14).

In his latest contributions (2014; 2015), the author thoroughly analyses his own audiovisual compositions, creating a solid referential framework to define mimetic visual music as a practice and from a theoretical point of view. He makes a strong connection with Emerson’s (1986) concepts of mimesis, aural and mimetic discourse, abstract and abstracted syntax, and expanding Emerson’s (1986, p.24) two-dimensional electroacoustic language grid into a three-dimensional visual music language space (Garro 2015, p.7).

However, what drives Garro’s audiovisual composition thinking away from a more integrated and intermedial approach is his consideration of sound and image as two separate entities at the compositional level. Despite his undeniable contribution to the visual music and audiovisual composition field of research and practice, this stance often shines through in his papers; as Harris (2021) points out, his formulation is

“Somewhat limited [...] by its lineage and perspective, as it positions the composition of sound and image, and the relationships formed between them as fundamentally distinct.”

2.4.7. Mapping Strategies

In his investigation of the audio and visual-gestural associations, Garro (2005a; 2012) proposes a continuum of distinct levels of combination and integration of sound and visual. The author does not explain much about the relationship between parametric mapping and the spectromorphological features shared by the two media. I argue it would be useful to elaborate on what he perhaps implies in discussing that relationship. Parametric mapping between sonic and visual-gestural profiles cannot be established on exact spectromorphological relationships because the two involved media do not share the same physical domain. The morphology of the sound spectra cannot be superimposed on the visual, physical, and morphological characteristics on a univocal or scientific basis. Even the most sophisticated system of audiovisual parametric mapping would be arbitrary, the result of deliberate choices, and in some cases, based at the most on solid perceptual associations.

Secondly, using the terminology association “parametric mapping” in the current vocabulary of digital arts practice usually refers to an exact, numeric, and algorithmic relationship between two or more parameters belonging to different domains but related for expressive purposes.

Following this, I wish to propose a small extension to his model, envisaging another level of mapping called *Associative Mapping*, to be inserted in Garro’s continuum between the key points called synchresis and parametric mapping.

As Garro (2005, p.6) suggests, parametric mapping is usually set when sonic parameter values are tightly linked to visual parameter values using a software application that allows this kind of data workflow and elaboration. The composer establishes the bond at the poietic level as a deliberate, arbitrary compositional strategy or rule. In this process, any change of specific audio features extracted as parametric values will affect the generation or manipulation of the associated visual parameters.

What I would add to his continuum diagram (Garro 2012, p.107) is something I call *Associative Mapping* (Fig. 1). This other mapping key-point is not grounded on data

communication and interaction between software environments but on the composer's choices based on shared similar phenomenological and perceptual attributes and gestural profiles, which I already generally defined as media features. Once clearly established, a set of associations can create various levels of integration and synergy, considering at the same time the result of the moving image and sound combination. Associative mapping might seem akin to synchresis; however, it is a more consistent and deliberate compositional strategy than synchresis, established at the design stage of the audiovisual work. Conversely, the synchresis mapping strategy could be based on a looser association, even casual, suggested to the composer by the material's interaction during the compositional process, similar to the *musique concrète* compositional approach.



Fig. 1: Garro's continuum of gestural audio vs visual association strategies revised by Chiamonte

*Tarkovskij non vuole dimostrare qualcosa, ma mostrare.
L'irripetibilità dell'istante afferrato e fermato che cade
nell'eternità. In un mondo che ha smarrito il significato, la
bellezza e il miracolo.*

*Tarkovskij does not seek to prove but to reveal.
The unrepeatable moment grasped and held fast that falls
into eternity. In a world that has lost meaning,
beauty and miracle.*

Antonio Socci (2002)

3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The methodology employed to conduct this research encompasses two integrated diverse approaches: practice-based artistic research and the unfolding of an autoethnographic narrative. The final output of my PhD research is constituted by a body of electroacoustic audiovisual compositions, which represent a field of practice and exploration of possible aesthetic and creative approaches, and an exegesis that sheds light on the creative process and the advancement of intermedial audiovisual composition strategies through the critical commentary of the Portfolio of compositions that apply the intermedial interference concept. Therefore, the context of this research allows the use of the integrated methodological approach I discuss in this chapter.

This contextual, analytical document examines and clarifies how the implementation of intermedial interference has influenced the development of the Portfolio. The critical discourse presented in the exegesis also illustrates the transformation of an electroacoustic music composer as he gradually transitions into an intermedial audiovisual composer. It has been natural to implement a narrative in parts of this document in order to explain my personal journey into audiovisual composition and the process of transformation I underwent. The consistent notes I made over the years on my compositional experience, and on my way to completing the PhD are presented in the appendixes and constitute the foundation of the autoethnographic approach.

3.2. Art as Research

Art in itself cannot be considered research. Art and research contribute to making meaning of the human life experience and to knowledge by acting in different contexts with different means and purposes. According to the 2014 UK Research Excellence Framework (REF), research is defined as a process of investigation leading to new insights effectively shared (REF 2014). This definition emphasises the importance of generating new knowledge through original investigation and communicating it to others in a way that can be understood and used. On the other hand, one possible definition of art is that it is a form of human expression in a visual, auditory, or performance-based medium that is intended to communicate an idea, elicit emotions, or stimulate the senses. Ultimately, art is a deeply personal and subjective

experience, and different individuals may have different definitions and interpretations of what constitutes art. Nonetheless, it is widely recognized as an essential part of human culture and a powerful means of communication and self-expression. It enables us to connect with others, to explore our emotions and experiences, and to challenge social norms and conventions.

Scrivener (2002) states that artists aspire to a research approach that places art and artmaking at the centre of the stage, considering the creative process of making art a form of research and the artwork produced as a form of knowledge. Scrivener does not argue against the idea that art objects can communicate knowledge, but he contends that knowledge conveyed by art is “of a superficial nature” (ibid., p.1), not capturing art’s profound insights about emotions, relationships, and our place in the world. Art has distinct objectives from the sciences; by adopting preconceived notions of research, art risks losing sight of its own function. Rather than producing definitive knowledge, art serves an equally significant but different and complementary role in knowledge acquisition. Art is subject to personal interpretation and cannot definitively convey the artist’s potential intended meaning unequivocally. We contrast knowledge transfer through information with knowing through subjective, sensory experience. Knowledge acquired by research can be shared and passed from one generation to the other through bodies of knowledge. This is not possible in the same way with art and its complex system of signification. Ultimately, Scrivener (ibid.) suggests that art has the potential to reveal new ways of viewing situations rather than presenting solutions for addressing them.

“Whereas original investigation is concerned with acquiring knowledge of what is or was the case, art making is concerned with providing ways of seeing and ways of being in relation to what is, was, or might be” (Scrivener 2002, p.12).

Scrivener’s (2002) contribution enriched my reflections on my practice-based research. However, it did not give me specific insight on how to set up a valid methodology. On the other hand, Coulter’s (2005) paper on multimedia composition as research has been essential to inscribing my procedure in a research methodology framework.

Coulter’s (2005) contribution proposes an approach to address concerns about the legitimacy of practice-based research in the field of multimedia composition. The study examines the process of multimedia composition and identifies it as a type of action research. The paper

then presents a model named The Multimedia Realisation Spiral (Coulter 2005, p.6), which can serve as a tool for validating multimedia composition as an action research methodology. Action research was established in the early 1940s by Kurt Lewin (Adelman 1993). It refers to a type of self-reflective inquiry that is carried out by researchers in real-world social settings. The goals of action research focus on improving and deepening understanding of one's own practices and gaining insight into the contexts in which these practices occur (Carr and Kemmis 1986). Action research methodology is based on a cyclical procedure encompassing three stages that can be repeated indefinitely until the resolution of the research process. There is a planning stage before the action (the process of composing), and then evaluation or review as a result of a reflective process. According to Coulter's (2005) proposal, audiovisual composition can be seen as a creative practice and reflective process similar to action research. It involves investigating and advancing technical knowledge while enhancing practice concurrently, analogous to action research. The model inspiring my practice-based intermedial audiovisual composition research refers to Coulter's, using the intuitive, creative practice Multimedia Realisation Spiral framework together with action research methodology (reflective critique). The peculiarity of this methodology is that cyclical reflective review-driven change occurs throughout, not just at the end. Both the art object and exegesis substantiate the research output.

3.3. Practice-based Artistic Research

Practice-based research is still not universally well comprehended in some academic contexts, and the issue of whether practice-based research might contribute to producing new knowledge—and how—is still up for debate. After the 1999 Bologna Process (EHEA 2023), artistic research has been increasingly integrated into the higher education framework and doctoral research in Europe (Lützow-Holm 2013). Edmonds et al. (2005, p.460) state that artistic practice-based research pursues, as a main practice aim, the creation of artworks and also generates “new knowledge and understanding” through research. Candy (2006, p.1) states that:

“Practice-based research is an original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice.”

In practice-based research, the artefact is the “basis of the contribution to knowledge” (ibid., p.1), forming an integral part of the final submission of PhD research. The generation of new

knowledge and understanding is embedded in the original artwork and demonstrated through it (Candy 2006). Thus, in order to disseminate, transfer, share, and contribute to new knowledge in the field, solid methods and procedures are essential and need to be put in place to achieve the task. The practice methodology adopts Coulter's (2005) findings, where an intuitive, creative practice model (Multimedia Realisation Spiral) is used in conjunction with the action research methodology (evaluation of practice through reflective critique). The theoretical methodology of this study is based on reflection, description, critical analysis, interpretation, and contextualisation of the practice and the creative process undertaken for creating the artefacts. However, the challenge in contributing to the production of new knowledge within an artistic research framework is that artistic research is "characterised by *both... and...* rather than *either... or...*" (Lützow-Holm 2013, p.63): the second approach is more common in conventional research. That is to say that the "*both... and...*" is a heuristic approach based on change and transformation where:

"Phenomena may have two or more meanings and be at once incomplete [...] *both* disciplinary *and* interdisciplinary, which is also a precondition for the emergence of new, unpredictable and transformative knowledge" (Lützow-Holm 2013, p.63).

I acknowledged that Scrivener (2002, p.2) argues that "art is not [...] a form of knowledge communication"; however, Lotman (2011, p.249) stated that "art is one of the forms of modelling activity." Lotman (*ibid.*, p.250) defines a model as "an analogue of the object of perception that substitutes it in the process of perception". Therefore, in practice-based artistic research, the presentation of the practical element is crucial to offer a full understanding of the advancement of knowledge because:

"An artistic model is always more extensive and closer to life than its interpretation, and the interpretation can always be only an approximation" (Lotman 2011, p.264).

3.4. Autoethnography and Artistic Research

Autoethnography is a method that, through a reflective process, has allowed me to illustrate how I changed my approach and perspective to composition as a result of a transformation as a person and an artist. "As a method, autoethnography combines characteristics of

autobiography and ethnography” (Ellis et al. 2011, p.3) in order to produce “meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience” (ibid., p.2), comprehend the experience of culture, and “complement, or fill gaps in, existing research” (Adams et al. 2017, p.3). During the investigation process, researchers who employ autoethnography as an approach to research write about their experiences, assembling and analysing them in hindsight (Ellis et al. 2011).

The autoethnographic method has also helped me present and critically explain my Portfolio by reflecting on my notes during the compositional process and describing: how I dealt with the main subject of investigation, intermedial interference; how I observed the evolution and development of my compositional approach within the intermedial perspective, gaining awareness of the process; how I brought about intermedial interference through the interaction between shared common features of media, and used balance to restore equilibrium in a passage (or at least, what I thought equilibrium should be). Ultimately, this method has allowed me to realise how I became aware of and experienced the transformational process.

In recent years, composers have adopted autoethnography as a means to explore the connection between their personal lives and cultural experiences in the composition of music and reflect on their practice (Bartleet 2021). In these creative investigations, the significance of ideas is on par with forms, and the observer’s perceptions hold equal importance to the artist’s intent. Additionally, the language and emotions conveyed through art hold as much weight as their aesthetic qualities (ibid.).

In autoethnographic investigations that employ the arts as a means of inquiry, the research process is not necessarily linear or bound by a set methodology like much of social-scientific research. Instead, it involves an ongoing exploration that is committed to asking questions and seeking deeper insights. However, when presenting research based on artistic autoethnography, “the complicated interplay that can arise between the creative work and words” (Bartleet 2021, p.141) needs to be considered. A piece of practice-based artistic research submitted as a PhD thesis, encompassing artefacts and a contextual document redacted with an autoethnographic method, should be considered a unique multi-modal body of inquiry. It can be challenging for the reader to understand the significant aspects of the research and make sense of it by “experiencing” the artefact and the writing. Bartleet (ibid., p.141) suggests that “multi-modal presentation formats might extend the future possibilities

of artistic autoethnographies”, potentially allowing for a deeper exploration of the autoethnographic method and the achievement of broader social and artistic objectives.

Bartleet (2021), in her contribution, argues that the interface between artistic research and autoethnography is constantly evolving and becoming more complex. Projects at this intersection use highly personal and creative forms of communication to engage audiences and artists in critical reflection. Through these methods, artistic research and autoethnography can be employed to tackle ambitious creative and social goals. The arts’ capacity for critical reflection, empathy, and evocation allows autoethnographers, artists, and audiences to increase their cultural awareness by performing, representing, and embodying ideas and relationships. Art challenges us to engage critically with life; autoethnography has the power to inspire artists and audiences to reflect critically on their own experiences and interactions with others within social contexts. The author concludes that this is where the future potential of artistic autoethnography lies: as a mode of creative inquiry and multi-modal representation that can incite “personal, disciplinary, and broader social change” (Bartleet 2021, p.142).

Using autoethnography as a research method, I can actively investigate all the questions arising from the reflection on the practice through critical analysis. I consider the practice methodology as fluid and open to be redefined and adapted according to developments in the research, which can be represented as an endless and cyclical spiral process that leads the researcher to reconsider their practice by revisiting cycles from a different perspective or beginning (Blaxter et al. 2010). The creative approach concerning the concept, design, and aesthetic of audiovisual composition is based on my aim to work within an intermedial writing perspective. This deepened awareness of the creative process has also influenced my practice method.

3.5. The Exegesis as an Artefact Complementing the Practice

Throughout this document, I have consistently used the term exegesis rather than a thesis because it emphasises the practice-based nature of my research. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, exegesis is defined as a “critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of scripture” (OED 2022). The exegesis aims to provide a deeper understanding of the text and its message. Within this practice-based research, the “text” is the Portfolio of compositions. The exegesis is written as a commentary, critical explanation, analysis, and interpretation of the creative process undertaken during my PhD research. The decision to

name my written work exegesis, therefore, derives from the context and setting of my work, which is practice-based research.

Over the last twenty years, practice-based artistic research has become increasingly recognised as a valuable approach to exploring creative practice and artistic innovation. One crucial element of this research approach is the use of exegesis as a complementary artefact to the creative practice, as it offers insights into the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of the artistic outcome of the research. I consider the role and value of explanation in my practice-based creative PhD research, drawing on the perspectives of scholars such as Kroll (2004), Milech and Schilo (2004), Hamilton and Jaaniste (2010), Lasky (2013), and Ings (2015).

Adopting an autoethnographic approach, Kroll (2004) argues that the exegesis is a vital bridge between creative practice and critical reflection. The exegesis enables artists to articulate their conceptual and theoretical concerns and situate their work within broader intellectual and artistic contexts. Similarly, Milech and Schilo (2004) propose three different exegesis models and emphasise the importance of exegesis to facilitate critical reflection and enable artists to engage with theoretical debates and ideas. With the “Research Question Model”, Milech and Schilo (ibid., p.9) offer a successful solution to transcend the dichotomy between theory and practice, artist and scholar, studio and library. This model holds great promise in empowering researchers and fostering the seamless integration of theory and practice, addressing a fundamental challenge in creative and media arts research. In this model, the two components, namely the exegesis and Portfolio, are distinct yet interconnected because they are designed as

“Independent answers to the same research question - independent because each component of the thesis is conducted through the ‘language’ of a particular discourse, related because each ‘answers’ a single research question” (Milech and Schilo 2004, p.9).

In this approach, creativity is considered an integral aspect of the entire research process, encompassing all stages from initiation to completion. Furthermore, research is viewed as a dynamic interplay between practical activities, creative production, written documentation, and reflection.

Ings (2015) also highlights the potential of the exegesis to enhance the visibility and impact of artistic research, serving as a means of sharing knowledge and promoting critical discourse, providing a space for critical reflection and theoretical engagement with the artwork and encouraging experiment with a variety of forms beyond the traditional written dissertation. Overall, the author emphasises the importance of finding appropriate voices and forms to enhance the modes of storytelling and research in practice-based research.

Hamilton and Jaaniste (2010, p.32) offer a slightly different perspective through their “connective” exegesis model, which

“Provides a dual orientation, which allows the researcher to both situate their creative practice within a trajectory of research and do justice to its personally invested poetics.”

They argue that the exegesis can be understood as a “connective tissue” that links the creative work with wider intellectual, artistic, and academic frameworks. They suggest that the exegesis should not be seen as a separate entity from the creative work but as an integral part of the research process. The creative work and the exegesis mutually inform and shape one another and constitute a single entity that is the output of the research process.

Lasky (2013) similarly emphasises the potential for creative writings in practice-led research to foster dialogue and engagement between artists and audiences, enabling a deeper understanding and appreciation of the work. He suggests the “poetics” approach to effectively expressing the connection between the creative work and the critical context, thoughts, and results associated with its creation. Lasky (2013, p.14) defines poetics as

“The means by which writers across a range of genres formulate and discuss a critical attitude to their own work.”

Lasky’s poetics is somewhat similar and connected to Nattiez’s (1990) “poietic” concept. However, for Lasky (2013), the notion of poetics encompasses the strategies writers employ to articulate and explore a critical perspective on their own work and the processes of composition and revision. Whereas Nattiez’s (ibid.) “poietic process” concerns the multifaceted act of creation to give rise to a symbolic form. This process encompasses both the form and content of the work. It involves intentional considerations of the necessary actions to produce the object, manipulate external materials, and create the musical work.

The exegesis can take diverse forms in arts-based research and serve various purposes. The exegesis can be understood as a creative artefact in its own right, offering insights into the artistic and intellectual processes that underpin the creative work. This artefact can contribute to the broader academic and theoretical debates of practice-based artistic research. Drawing on these perspectives, I view the exegesis as crucial to my practice-based creative PhD research. Through writing and reflecting on my practice, I aim to develop a deeper understanding of the conceptual and theoretical concerns underpinning my work and to situate my creative practice within broader intellectual and artistic contexts. I also see the exegesis as a means of sharing my knowledge and contributing to the critical discourse within practice-based artistic research. By offering insights into my creative and intellectual processes, I hope to contribute to the ongoing conversation around the value and potential of practice-based artistic research.

The sound film is a form of synthetic composition.

Sergei M. Eisenstein (1937)

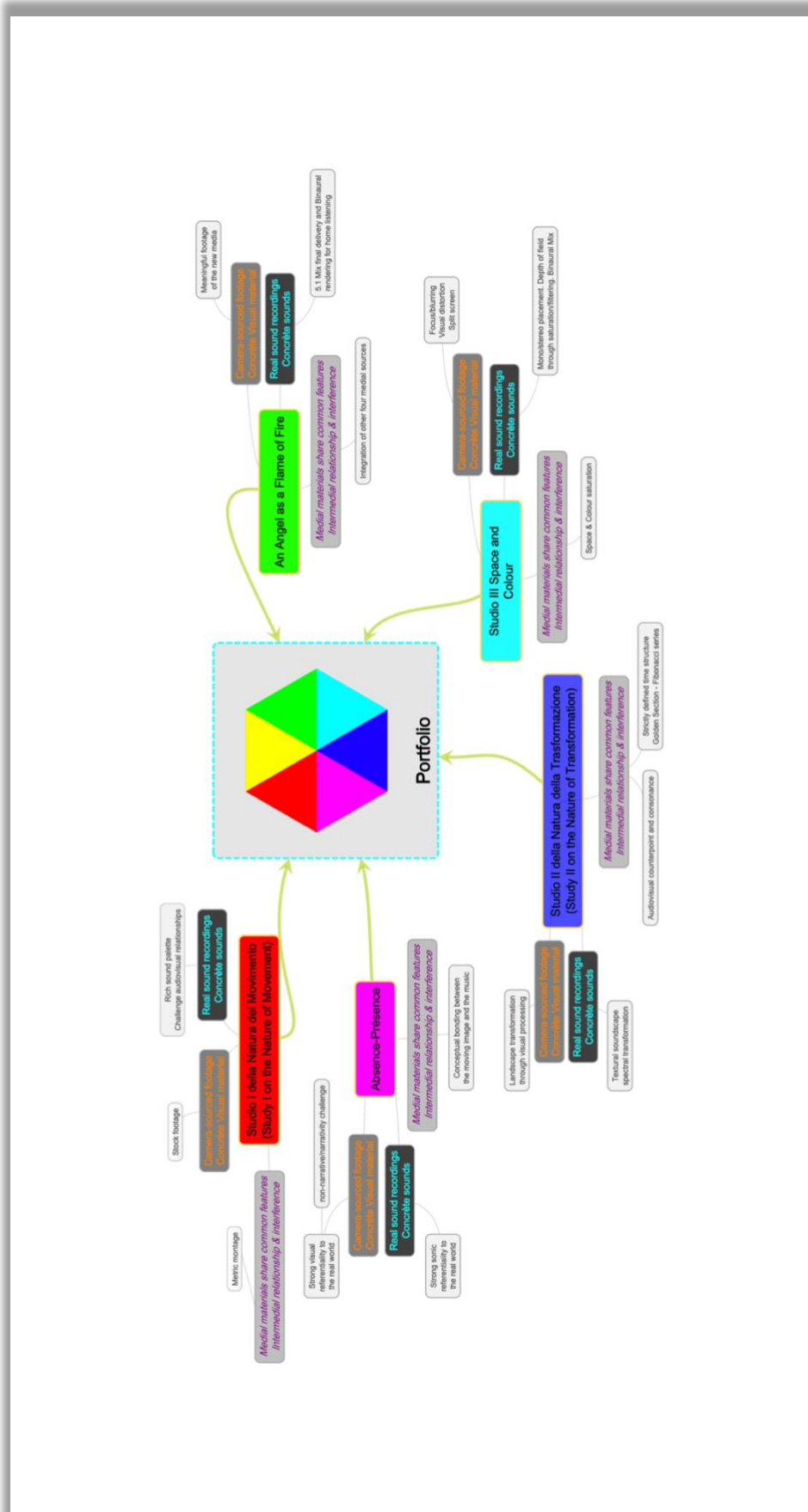


Fig. 2: Portfolio of compositions conceptual map

4. The Portfolio of Audiovisual Compositions

4.1. Introduction to The Portfolio: Presentation and Critical Commentary

The six projects discussed in the following pages represent the main subject of this investigation into different ways of combining, integrating, and fusing sound and the moving image in an intermedial audiovisual composition context, where the soundtrack is electroacoustic music. These creative projects are part of this practice-based PhD and form the outcome of the research, which is from now on referred to as the Portfolio.

The Portfolio has been composed by employing an intermedial creative approach. All the compositional strategies and methods experimented with are considered “additive”, developed via an accumulative process. This is to say that during the composition of a piece, whether a procedure is considered valid and valuable for the study, that procedure could be implemented in the subsequent compositions, representing an enrichment of the compositional strategies and a step forward in developing and completing the research. Given these premises, the Portfolio has to be regarded as a unique and organic body of works.

This section also provides a critical commentary on each Portfolio composition. The text is purposely *précis*, concise, and designed to be read as a complement to the audiovision of the pieces. I convey essential information about creative approaches and compositional choices without being prescriptive to avoid significantly affecting the reader’s interpretation and discernment. It is necessary to allow the audioviewer to experience the artefact freely and draw their own conclusion on meaning, audiovisual relationships, media interaction and intermedial interference, and possible subjective (meta)-narrative unfolding. This decision is consistent with my “open work” (Eco 1962) perspective on multiple interpretations of the encounter with these audiovisual compositions. I do not have a definite “recipe” to offer as the final truth. Instead, I provide an opportunity for ever-changing insights and interpretations of the artefact created by a succession of experiential attendance cycles (Coulter 2005). At every attendance, the composition can produce different meanings based on the momentary perceptual intuition of the audioviewer. However, for some of the works, there are more detailed technical notes and explanations in the second appendix of this exegesis. These notes can give the reader an in-depth understanding of the evolution and development of the creative processes underlying the compositional strategies and choices.

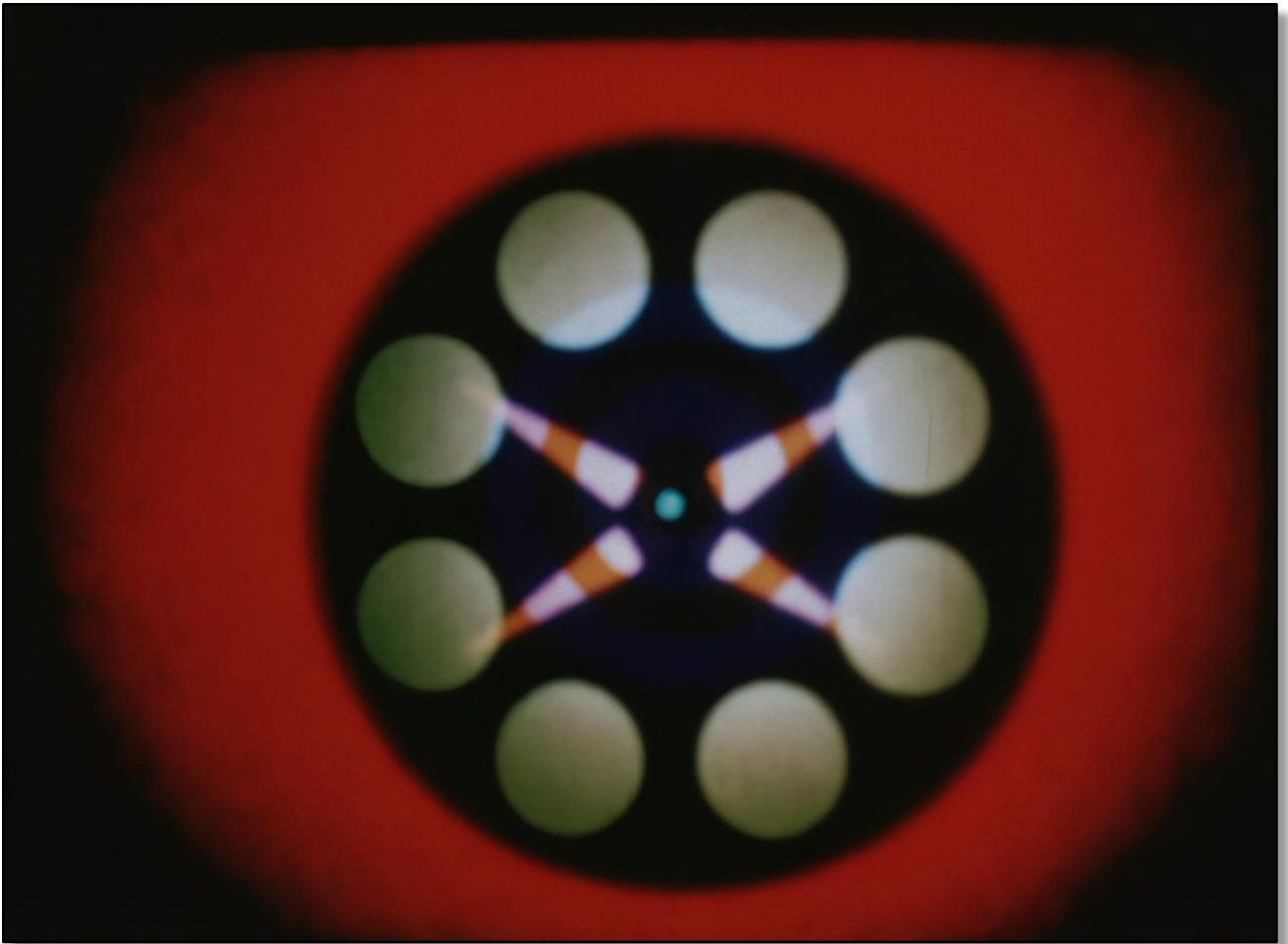


Fig. 3: Still from *No 7: Color Study*

4.2. *No. 7: Color Study - On Harry Smith's Early Abstractions (1950-52)*

4.2.1. Compositional Intent and Aims

The primary intent of this first Portfolio composition was to observe and study how intermedial interference developed in the space between the two media when the moving image is conceived and composed *before* the sound. I also investigated whether using the shared common media feature of movement/motion contributes to building a robust intermedial integration. In the compositional process, I aimed at giving the visual and sonic elements the same importance, although pursuing equilibrium between them, depending on their behavioural properties (movement/motion, spectral mobility features, visual and musical energy, etc.) at specific film moments. Movement manifests in the visual through the motion or action in the frame of the abstract shapes Smith painted onto the film. Whereas, in music, motion can be expressed in several ways. It can be an evolution in the sound spectrum (Smalley 1997), a dynamic displacement of sound objects in the sonic listening field, or can be established in the temporal domain through the duration or rhythm of the musical events. I wanted to confirm whether it was possible to compose an intermedial work using materials not produced simultaneously and by different artists.

4.2.2. Contents and Compositional Plan

Audiovisual materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A preconceived silent abstract animation featuring geometric shapes and colours.• Instrumental sound recordings (mainly flute) - concrète sounds.
Compositional assumptions, rules, and strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creation of a structurally integrated electroacoustic music soundtrack where music and the moving images have the same importance with a balanced distribution of weights.• Use of shared common features (movement/motion and rhythm) to produce media integration and intermedial interference.

Table 1: *No. 7: Color Study* contents and compositional plan

4.2.3. Critical Commentary

This first study investigated the possibility of creating an intermedial relationship in an audiovisual artefact where the visual was already composed. The original animation chosen for this study is a silent abstract film by Harry Smith (1950-52). It could be a common belief that an artwork can only show intermedial properties when the medial forms of expression involved in the creation are conceived and composed at the same time and possibly by the same author. This could be related to the idea that intermedial relationships can be better shaped and controlled when a single artist manages all the materials involved in the artwork in a unique compositional gesture. However, recent scholarly discourse (Harris 2021) and artistic practice (Hermes Intermedia 2009-2017) show that intermedial audiovisual oeuvres have been realised in collaborative contexts and using pre-existent visuals produced by only one of the artists in the collaboration (Chiaramonte and Cirulli 2011).

The main aim of this study focused on what happened between the visual and sonic elements and how such events could shape novel potential meaning for the audience, something that would not have been possible to experience with the sole vision of the silent film or listening to the music alone. The visual elements and the structural form of the animation, being already established, generally governed the realisation of the soundtrack. The film displays different geometrical shapes and colours. They were categorised and grouped into families, and their visual dynamics and transformations were also considered. Moreover, the animation is formally structured in five movements. All these elements and their behaviour were used to map and control the musical structures and parameters (refer to Appendix 2, p.151). A significant effort was made to give visual and sound equal importance (Kapusinski 1997), although the two media were not developed together in this case study. This did not mean that both elements were always in the foreground and strongly meaningful; a balance has been pursued not to overcharge the audioviewer with information, negatively affecting the inference of potential meaning as a consequence. However, expressivity and a clear sense of direction are essential attributes to inform the compositional materials. When the two materials are in motion, it could be easier to achieve an effective integration (Kapusinski 1997). This gives the composer a chance to explore intermedial creativity.

The greatest challenge considering my Portfolio composition *No. 7: Color Study*, where the visual elements pre-existed the soundtrack, was to create unity between sound and image.

The cohesion between a silent abstract film and sound/music was possible but hard to achieve. One of the most challenging aspects of the process was integrating the two media when the visual elements were immutable and “set in stone”; how then to create a synergic perceptual experience? The experience was like composing a counterpoint study on an assigned voice, that kind of compositional exercise I used to conduct during my years of study at the conservatoire as a composer.

This study investigated the development of an intermedial audiovisual relationship in a compositional context where the sound and the moving image have shared the common feature of movement/motion, which is space-based for the moving image and time-based for the music. The displacement and motion of abstract shapes on the screen space were considered to be visual features. At the same time, rhythmic variations, spatial placement, and panning in the aural listening field were assumed to be the movement features of the sonic/musical elements. The main shared feature of rhythm, strongly present in both media, was the primary cement that held the composition together and created constructive interference through synchrony (see par. 2.4.1, p.40). Synchrony between discrete and sudden visual motions and musical accents was crucial in shaping the piece and keeping attention and pace. This is particularly evident at the beginning of the third movement, starting at 02:24:12. Another example is from 04:24:00 to 04:33:00, with a different mood and behaviour. See also the reprise in variation of this at 05:07:10. In hindsight, considering the piece after having completed the Portfolio, I can say that I mainly used a PSP (Primary Synchronisation Point) approach in composing, even though several SSPs (Secondary Synchronisation Points) occurred during the compositional process. However, I conceptualised these compositional techniques long after I composed this study; they have been developed working on *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento* and *Absence - Présence* and were introduced in the definitions paragraph (par. 1.3.6, p.26).

In some passages, I let the two media develop their own discourse, creating independent perceptual dimensions. The reader can note this conduct in the second movement, starting at 01:47:00 till 02:23:00, with very few synchronic audiovisual gestures. This is because a steady and continuous rhythmic and synchronic behaviour could have negatively impacted the audioviewer (destructive interference), hindering the perception because of imbalance. In any successful music composition, moments of tension always alternate with relaxation and

resolutions. Tension and directionality have been created through the interference of rhythmic media features, tight synchronisation, and pace. In contrast, relaxation and resolutions have been produced through audiovisual counterpoint, developing temporary independent media behaviours and discourses. This compositional strategy shows similarities with Smalley's (1997, pp.117-118) concept of behavioural relationships among spectromorphologies, where the degree of motion coordination can move on the continuum "loose-tight" on the vertical synchronisation axis.

This study can confirm that intermedial interference can be created using shared common features of media such as movement/motion and rhythm. Balance was achieved by designing diverse and contrasting behavioural relationships among the audiovisual materials and proved to be an essential factor in composing an audiovisual work. It is also evident that some of my audiovisual compositions predating this research were already conceived and developed as intermedial works of art.

4.2.4. Implications for Future Pieces

The outcome and findings of this first study established a solid foundation and starting point for the subsequent compositions of my Portfolio and confirmed my general theoretical ideas. I discovered that it is possible to create an artefact where the integration of medial material creates intermedial interaction and interference even when the two medial forms of expression have been composed by different artists and at different times.

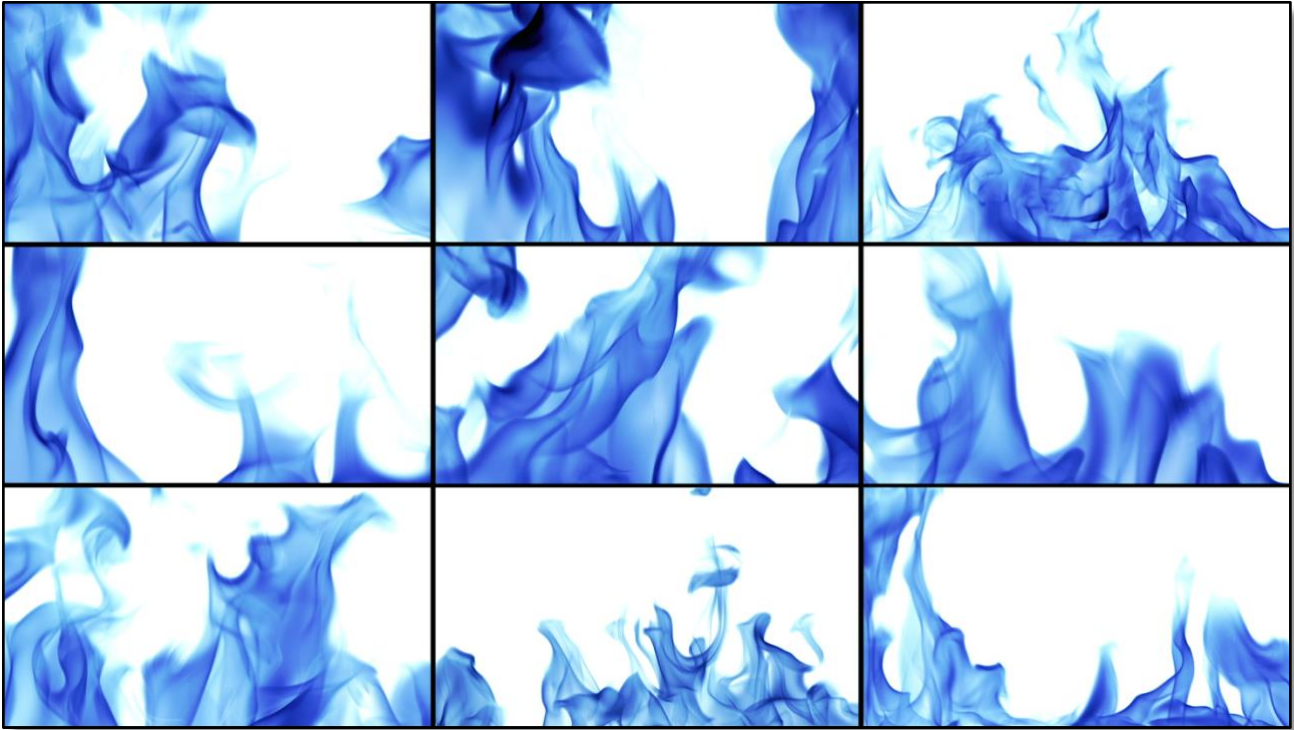


Fig. 4: Still from *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento*

4.3. *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento*

4.3.1. Compositional Intentions and Aims

With the first Portfolio composition, I confirmed that it was possible to establish intermedial interference in an audiovisual composition through media interaction while using non-original visual material. With *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento*, I intended to develop intermedial relationships between music and the moving image within a specific context and constraints. I employed a rich sound palette to investigate whether synchrony and the phenomenon of synchresis (Chion 1994) overruled the use of different sound materials combined with the same video material in making the audiovisual relationship efficacious. The initial synchronic perceptual relationship established by the first sound object and the chosen moving image could negatively affect the perceived relationship in the following events, where a different sound is synchronised with that given shot. I also applied the opposite strategy, where diverse visual materials were synchronised with the same sound. I investigated whether using a restrictive shared common feature between music and the moving image (in this study, exact timing and precise durations of sound and video events through metric montage) could contribute to building intermedial interference through interaction and integration of the two involved media. I aimed to understand better how synchrony and synchresis work in audiovisual music composition. I discovered that a tight and effective audiovisual relationship was not endangered thanks to synchrony and the resulting synchresis effect, despite the challenge posed to the audiovisual relationship because of the timbral differences in sounds used with the same video material and the differences in the motion behaviours and typology of the visual used with the same sound.

4.3.2. Contents and Compositional Plan

Audiovisual materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Camera sourced stock footage - concrète visual material.• A rich palette of real sound recordings - concrète sounds.
Compositional assumptions, rules, and strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A wide variety of sound materials.• Application of audiovisual metric montage.

Table 2: *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento* contents and compositional plan

4.3.3. Critical Commentary

This second study investigated how the audiovisual relationship developed in a compositional context where the visual material derived from camera-sourced stock footage and the sonic one from real sound recordings.

Inspiration is drawn from the “concrète visual material” concept introduced by Hyde (2012, p.172) and defined earlier on in this exegesis to observe how the connections between non-narrative and quasi-abstract moving images and concrète sounds developed within an intermedial approach to audiovisual composition. The sounds and the footage were treated and elaborated similarly, using a compositional practice commonly employed in musique concrète. The moving images were intended as “discrete entities analogous to the *objets sonores* proposed by Schaeffer and discussed by many later writers” (Hyde 2012, p.172).

The composition intentionally utilised a rich sound palette, avoiding a common practice of electroacoustic music that relies significantly on limited starting materials. The piece depended on the development of those small foundational sonic cells. The choice of implementing a rich sound palette was to challenge the recognised relationships between specific images and sounds and vice versa. The phenomenon of synchresis (Chion 1994) and synchrony played an essential role in this study. The same sound object was used in relation to, and in synchrony with, different video clips that shared similar motion behaviours. Conversely, different sounds, although belonging to the same family, have been used in synchrony with the same video material. This audiovisual contradiction could interfere with the coherent impression that a visual gesture produced precisely the synchronous sound heard.

Another strand of investigation in this second study was based upon experimenting with the metric montage method theorised by Eisenstein (1949, p.72), where “the fundamental criterion for this construction is the absolute lengths of the pieces.” Time, intended as musical durations and video clip lengths, was the common feature shared by music and the moving image. The video clips and sounds were joined following exact proportional ratios, analogous to those controlling musical events’ succession. We do not usually use bars and beats in electroacoustic music like in traditional instrumental music. However, the use and manipulation of time intended as the duration of a musical gesture, a sound object, or a textural passage still exists. Creating proportional relationships between the duration of related gestures or similar motion behaviours is also common. This compositional strategy

was applied to both sound and the moving image, generating intermedial interaction and possibly interference.

The principal gestural sound object I used was derived from experimenting with striking the guitar strings with a little metal spoon between the nut and the headstock, very close to the tuning pegs. The guitar strings were also scratched with the spoon, which was let to bounce on them after the first linear motion. The original raw sound material was subsequently processed with a granular tool and time-stretched to obtain a textural sound object rich in micro gestures within the texture and create a “texture-carried” structure (Smalley 1997, p.114).

The mimetic qualities of the gestural sound object are evident, and the sound source is recalled. The source bonding in this first typology of sound object is of a high level. The perceivable “energy-motion trajectory” (or “primal gesture”) (Smalley 1997, p.111) creates a “first-order surrogacy” (ibid., p.112) gesture for the raw material (we do not hear it in its raw form in the piece), which is transformed into “second-order surrogacy” through editing and synchronisation with other sounds and visual material in the composition, becoming “musical” (00:17:06). This sound object interacts in sync with different video clips. At the beginning of the work (00:17:06; 00:26:13; 01:03:04), we can hear it mimicking a water drop and interacting with textural sounds derived from the same raw material and breath sounds. Around 01:56:03, it emerges from its own texture without synching any specific visual gesture but merging with textural moving images. Towards the end of the piece (from 03:58:14 and onwards), it interacts with processed snowflakes, marking in sync their change of direction the first time we hear it (03:58:14). This is also an example of SSP happening by chance and exalted in the mix. As such, the perceptual result of these interactions is different in those two instances. Furthermore, I did not notice any destructive intermedial interference but rather a positive one. Despite the source being recognisable, the strong mimetic/gestural properties and an evident synchresis effect make this sound believable as the result of that action visible on screen (03:58:14). As Chion (1994, p.63) asserted:

“Certain experimental videos and films demonstrate that synchresis can even work out of thin air - that is, with images and sounds that strictly speaking have nothing to do with each other, forming monstrous yet inevitable and irresistible agglomerations in our perception.”

From a perceptual point of view, it may be possible to lose the audiovisual connection with the supposed source and be transported to another experiential dimension.

On the other hand, diverse sonic qualities emerge from its listening when this gestural sound object (and its derivatives) interact without exact synchronisation with different video materials, such as abstractly processed snowflakes (04:06:09; 04:09:08). In the final gesture (04:30:00), the synchresis effect is still in play to an extent, thanks to synchronisation with a specific visual gesture (PSP). Yet, perceptual experience derived from intermedial interference drives attention towards more abstract audiovisual relationships in the second part of the composition (from 03:34:00 to the end). This implies experiencing a looser and more symbolic/interpretative connection between the visual and the gestural sound.

Once again, intermedial interference created a positive perceptual outcome despite those recognisable gestural sounds related to very different video materials. The temporal distance in the composition between the two events object of the study might have favoured a positive outcome with no audiovisual dissonance effect. In contrast, a controversial or ambiguous perceptual result might emerge if the two events were closer in time.

The textural sound object derived from the original percussive sound permeated the whole composition, acting as a unifying “glue”. It was used in sync with both different visual materials and with identical shots at other times. I soon realised that the second experimental approach, i.e., using different sounds, although belonging to the same family, in combination or synchrony with the same video material, was redundant and irrelevant. Traces of this attempt can be found in the final section (from 03:34:00), where the perceptual effect was a continuous exchange in the nature of the sonic layers, resulting in a dynamic sense of slow-motion progression because of the textural nature of both the sounds and the visual.

The second strand of investigation, the experimentation with the metric and rhythmic montage, caused an in-depth reflection on the general nature of the audiovisual relationship in cinematic practices. The whole composition was constructed on tight successions of exact audiovisual durations. Furthermore, in the central part of the piece (from 02:38:20 to 03:08:20), a steady beat governs the relationship between music and visuals. Still, this shared media feature of exact musical duration and timing of sound and video, although painstakingly crafted, lies in the background, acting as an “invisible” structural foundation. For this reason, I again watched Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), and specifically *The*

Odessa Steps episode, then *October* (1928), where he put his metric and rhythmic montage techniques in place (Eisenstein 1949). Perceptually speaking, I noticed formally balanced successions of shots and scenes that conferred pace to the audiovisual experience and pushed forward the perception of time. This is the same effect I received from *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento*, reviewing it critically. Based on my perceptual experience, I discovered that the essential, foundational elements of a composition, like the bricks that structurally comprise a building, can be overlooked or taken for granted. Though subtle or invisible in the final product, they undergird the composition. Working on timing and rhythmic editing in audiovisual pieces made me realise the critical role of these “bricks” that allow the overall shape and perceptual experience to cohere. On the other hand, we can perceive whether a composition lacks formal and structural balance, which prevents us from fully appreciating the work. Therefore, as in architecture, original and innovative formal structures and shapes could also be recognised in music and visual music; this could be a media feature belonging to a broader and far-reaching arc.

4.3.4. Implications for Future Pieces

I consider the awareness gained by conducting this study about how synchrony, synchresis, and metric montage work to be an outstanding asset for the following studies. Synchrony has been investigated more deeply later in this research, creating a classification of different types of synchrony to establish compositional methods and strategies.

Absence - Présence

An Audiovisual Composition by Antonino Chiaramonte



Fig. 5: Still from *Absence - Présence*

4.4. *Absence - Présence*

4.4.1. Compositional Intentions and Aims

With *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento*, I better understood how synchrony and synchresis worked in audiovisual composition and how they contributed to creating audiovisual relationships, media integration, and intermedial interference. With *Absence - Présence*, I wanted to experiment and observe to what extent the deliberate use of ambiguous but referential moving images, in conjunction with voice sounds, could elicit and favour some form of subjective meta-narrative. In this study, diverse types of audiovisual synchronisations were also experimented with, eventually developing an approach to the synchronic relationship that can be integrated as a method into an intermedial audiovisual compositional strategy. I planned to employ non-time-based, shared common features of media to create media interaction and intermedial interference. For non-time-based media features, I utilised poetic concepts that refer to specific words, colours, visual imagery styles, hues, and metaphorical sounds to create a network of conceptual relationships in order to implement an associative mapping strategy. This approach is linked to what is introduced in par. 1.3.2, p.21 (media features) and par. 2.4.7, p.52 (associative mapping). I aimed to gain insight into the intermedial relationship between different medial materials which share non-time-based common features, and to confirm the power of specific medial materials in constructing meta-narratives in the absence of predetermined storytelling. I used insights derived from the compositional process of *Absence - Présence* and previous studies to devise a taxonomy of synchronic relationships (par. 1.3.6, p.26).

4.4.2. Contents and Compositional Plan

Audiovisual materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Camera sourced footage - concrète visual material. Recognisable footage with a clear referentiality to reality (human figure).
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Real sound recordings - concrète sounds. Recognisable sounds with a clear referentiality to reality (voices).
Compositional assumptions, rules, and strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-predetermined storytelling.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experimentation of different types of synchrony.

- Conceptual bonding between the moving image and music at the level of poetical foundations, intended as a non-time-based shared common media feature.

Table 3: *Absence - Présence* contents and compositional plan

4.4.3. Critical Commentary

This third study investigated how to establish intermedial relationships between the medial materials involved in creating the work, building upon the findings and intermedial compositional strategies devised in the previous studies, and developing them further. A robust conceptual bonding was established between the moving image and the musical elements and used as shared expressive media features at the level of the poetic foundations (associative mapping). This is to say that well-defined and exact links were determined between concepts, colours, shapes, and sounds, mapping them together. Based on these associative premises, I could control and include different medial materials in the creative process, integrating them into a unique compositional strategy. This approach helped explore intermedial interference between diverse medial sources.

This work challenged the concept of non-narrative visual music as opposed to that of narrativity, using camera-sourced footage “abstracted” from reality and concrète sounds. In this study, the moving image and sound have a potent referentiality to the real world using a single human figure and voice sounds. As stated by Garro (2012, p.104), visual music “would typically consider works that are non-narrative but not necessarily non-representational”. Still, using camera-sourced footage and actual sound recordings “inevitably shifts the artefact towards much more powerful and ubiquitous mediatic experiences, such as cinematography” (Garro 2015, p.3). Those materials create a “force field” that “is nearly impossible to elude”, and “narrative is the inescapable source of this attraction” (ibid., p.3). The study does not formally rely upon any predetermined storytelling; it is non-narrative by assumption. I experimented and observed to what extent the deliberate use of ambiguous but referential moving images, in conjunction with voice sounds, could elicit some form of narrativity or subjective meta-narrative.

In this study, I experimented with diverse types of audiovisual synchronisations, developing my approach to the synchronic relationship between the moving image, visual gesture, and

musical sound. The experimentation with synchronisation typologies has informed my practice-based research from the beginning (with *No.7: Color Study*), even though it was not conscious or conceptually explicit then. However, considering and reflecting afterwards on my experiments in progress has led me to devise the definitions presented in the introduction of this exegesis (par. 1.3.6, p.26). I implemented—in different ways—all the compositional methods used hitherto in this practice-based research, i.e., PSP and SSP (from 00:41:16 to 01:00:14) in conjunction with the metric and rhythmic montage (from 03:10:02 to 03:21:00); rhythm is once again the composition's leading supporting motor, even if in an invisible way, as argued previously (see par. 4.3.3, p.76).

In *Absence - Présence*, all diverse media share non-time-based conceptual and poetic features. These shared common features of media informed the compositional strategy and process; they have been mapped, following and experimenting with my idea of associative mapping as an extension of Garro's (2012) continuum of gestural vs. visual association strategies. An example can be seen in the "marine" sequence (from 02:42:12 to 03:10:02). For an exhaustive, in-depth discussion of this topic, the reader can refer to Appendix 2, p.162, at the end of this contextual document; all the details relating to the mapping strategies can be found there.

What might strike the audioviewers in the first instance when they experientially encounter this audiovisual composition is the degree of communicative power created by the synergetic union of all the different media involved in the work, exhibiting a notable level of intermedial interference. In hindsight, I can notice a relationship between intermedial interference created by media interaction and Kapuscinski's (1997) "linking" concept. Each medium has its own specific way of conveying information and meaning, different modalities. When media are linked, they interact, and their similarities (the common media features), expressed in different modes, resonate, producing constructive interference. Intermedial interference is a perceptual phenomenon that occurs when media features interact. It involves conceptual processing and symbolic and metaphorical interpretation of the phenomenon, providing a potentially meaningful encounter with an audiovisual composition.

“The intermodal experience can be highly immersive. The multi-sensory content can make it extremely rich and intense. The intermodal gestures act as very strong stimuli. They can have a very direct, almost physical impact” (Kapusinski 1997, p.5).

The emotional impact this work might have on the spectators is not for me to evaluate. However, the intricate bonding created by referential sounds (sea waves and water) and mimetic visuals (e.g., the wavy blue bed linen at 02:42:12), images of the human figure (although mainly processed), singing and speaking voices, and the synchresis effect yields a compelling perceptual experience. In this work, the presence of a human body and its “voice” are potent elements contributing to the unfolding of meta-narratives. Still, the non-narrative assumption at the foundation of this composition lives and is supported by the compositional techniques through which visual imagery and sounds have been processed and abstracted from reality. This loosened their source bondings, creating a higher order of surrogacy. The media materials were treated as concrete audiovisual objects and organised over time with montage techniques. Moreover, no script or narrative devices underpinned the piece’s creative development.

On the other hand, although the composition is non-narrative, it retained representational features despite the composer’s attempt to get “away from immediate recognisability, to resist the attractive pull of cinematographic narrativity” (Garro 2014b, p.3) through audiovisual manipulation. The final result can therefore elicit subjective meta-narratives. These specific materials produced a magnetic polarisation that is impossible to avoid. Without considering all the emotional and personal backgrounds underlying the work, the poetics, and the material, it is difficult to resist asking questions about who the person depicted is, what she is feeling and why, and what she is doing and experiencing. One of the most significant audiovisual passages in this regard could be the extreme close-up with a flowing tear towards the end of the composition (from 05:38:09 to the end).

Reflecting on balance, it was always at the forefront of my concerns during the compositional process. I had to pay much attention to the relationship and equilibrium between all the materials, mainly because their strong referentiality made them slip easily into the background or move forward in the foreground, taking perceptual control of the experience and obfuscating other elements. Despite my efforts, a section of the work between 03:52:00 and

04:52:00 still concerns me. This passage reintroduces material in variation. The tone is dimmed, textural, and semi-abstract: it is ethereal and may lack good balance, and the interaction and subsequent intermedial interference between the medial elements may not be entirely successful.

4.4.4. Implications for Future Pieces

The light cast by this study over the intermedial audiovisual composition practice was of high value. The main assets were the awareness gained about the audiovisual relationship and intermedial interference using powerful referential materials, the different types of synchrony, and the use of conceptual associative mapping of materials based on their expressive shared common features at the artistic foundation of the work.

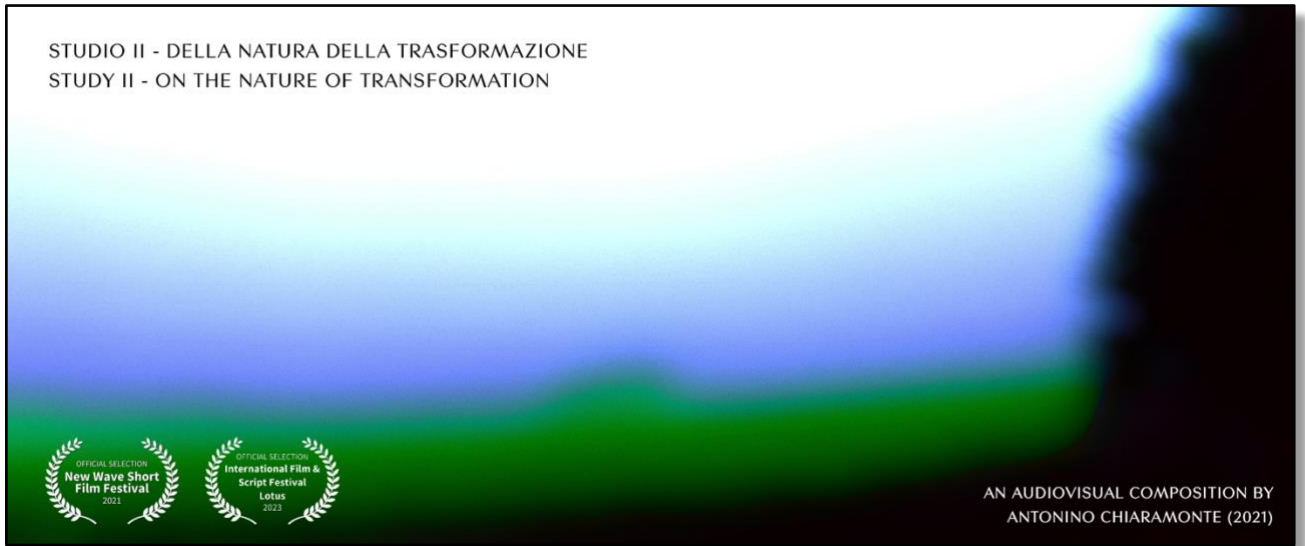


Fig. 6: Still from *Studio II - della Natura della Trasformazione*

4.5. *Studio II - della Natura della Trasformazione*

4.5.1. Compositional Intentions and Aims

With *Absence - Présence*, I achieved a better understanding of how intermedial interference between medial materials works when the moving image and the sound have powerful referentiality to the real world; I also attained an in-depth classification of different types of synchrony. In *Studio II - della Natura della Trasformazione*, I employed a compositional approach where another time-based shared common feature of media was the foundation for developing the intermedial relationship between the two medial materials. The study aimed to observe how the intermedial relationship between the moving image and music—and possibly intermedial interference—evolved over a strictly defined time structure, using the Fibonacci series to control the timing of audiovisual events and audiovisual counterpoint and harmony (Alves 2005; Evans 2005). I intended to develop further in-depth knowledge of intermedial interference within a specific framework of a strictly defined time structure using audiovisual counterpoint and harmony.

4.5.2. Contents and Compositional Plan

Audiovisual materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Camera sourced footage - concrète visual material, natural landscapes.• Real sound recordings - concrète sounds, soundscape recordings.
Compositional assumptions, rules, and strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Fibonacci series controls the timing of events, both for the footage and the sound.• The sounds are processed with different degrees of elaboration; similar processes are applied to the moving image.• Audiovisual counterpoint and harmony are created by contrast and consonance between music and video.

Table 4: *Studio II - della Natura della Trasformazione* contents and compositional plan

4.5.3. Critical Commentary

This study investigated the relationship between music and moving images, seeking to establish media integration, interaction, and intermedial interference between the two media when the sound and the imagery hold a potent referentiality to the real world but in the

absence of any human figure. The leading compositional strategy was to synchronise the unprocessed footage with the same natural environment's processed sounds, whereas processed moving imagery was related to natural, unprocessed sounds. However, there was always a level of ambiguity where non-processed sounds were listened to with non-processed images and processed sounds with processed images. The formal structure of this study was based on the Golden Section that defined the relationship between the moving image and music durations. The Fibonacci series, which approximately represents the Golden Section, controlled the events' timing for the footage and the sound. The sequence was used to shape the general form, the movements, and the sub-section duration, providing, in this way, a solid formal coherence. This compositional approach established a rigorous, time-based, shared common media feature to develop the intermedial interaction between the two medial materials and produce interference.

Another specific aspect of the audiovisual relationship was investigated in this study. In some sections of the piece, I experimented with musical sounds that starkly contrasted with the visual, creating opposition and audiovisual counterpoint (e.g., from 02:03:33 to 02:14:00 and following similar passages in the same section). In other parts, the sound was in consonance with the visual, creating audiovisual harmony (e.g., the Prelude from 00:16:00 to 00:50:00). All the sounds were recorded from environmental sources as in soundscape composition. The footage was of natural landscapes. The sounds were processed with differing degrees of elaboration; similar processes were applied to the moving image through blurring, distortion, split-screen, and colour manipulation. This shared approach to manipulating materials created diverse degrees of "source bonding" and, therefore, different "orders of surrogacy" (Smalley 1997, p.110), both for the sounds and images. Audiovisual counterpoint and harmony, created by contrast and consonance between music and video, were experimented with in order to observe how intermedial interference contributed to shaping the audiovisual experience of this piece through the interaction of such diverse combination, integration, and fusion of sound and the moving image.

The composition was created between the summer of 2020 and the spring of 2021; the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and lockdowns profoundly influenced its production. Most of the footage was filmed in solitude and almost human-deserted locations. In hindsight, I can notice the piece traces the emotional impact that those challenging experiences left on my

mind. The composition took the form of a slow-paced meditation on transformation, displaying, when recognisable, a bare nature taking back control and supremacy over humankind.

The Prologue presents the primary audiovisual material object of experimentation and investigation: a desolated, cold, and dark shot of a tree at the border of a misty countryside at dusk in consonance with an apparently realistic soundscape, even though fabricated and rhythmically organised, creates audiovisual harmony. This articulated audiovisual object is the subject of a hidden transformation process for the whole piece's duration. However, transformation processes are visibly applied to material belonging to the same category during the piece. At the end of the composition (05:55:00), the Finale, this very audiovisual object is presented again and shows what the process transformed it into.

The feature shared by the two media was of an abstract origin but was assigned to the temporal domain. The Fibonacci series is expressed by a sequence of numbers representing the proportions and ratios of the Golden Section. I applied this proportional sequence of numbers to the events' duration. All the durations of the audiovisual events adhered to an invisible grid at both macro-formal and micro-formal levels. However, slight adjustments have sometimes been made to craft a better visual or sonic balance of the elements. Flexibility, and the application of balance through adjustments, was paramount for an optimal outcome of the piece. Working under this strict rule was a positive experience, which ensured a high level of control in the compositional process.

As for the previous compositions, I used time-based shared features of media to articulate the audiovisual relationship and create an expressive artefact where the integration and interaction of these media features could produce intermedial interference; its compositional process sparked similar reflections and insight to the past ones. Time-based features helped set up and balance the composition at the formal and structural levels, but their contribution cannot be "seen" directly in the work. They are perceptually experienced in the background as an invisible watermark that imparts to the composition a sense of "general harmony between the parts" (OED 2023), which is balance. As a result, the interaction of time-based media features did not directly produce intermedial interference but a general sense of equilibrium that holds the work together through rhythm and allows a meaningful perceptual

experience in the encounter with it. However, I discovered that there is a connection with the concept of rhythm in the way Varèse intended:

“Rhythm is the element in music that gives life to the work and holds it together. It is the element of stability, the generator of form” (Varèse and Wen-Chung 1966, p.15).

On the other hand, using the same type of audiovisual material, a contrast was created between the unprocessed sound and processed footage and vice versa. This resulted in noteworthy interaction effects and intermedial interference. The audiovisual counterpoint and harmony were experimented with considerably processed material, with its original form and with different combinations of the two. For instance, this can be encountered in Section IV from 04:55:00 to 05:55:00, where intermedial interference was produced through the material’s diverse articulations and behavioural alternations.

Intermedial interference shaped a vast array of perceptual stimuli that kept attention alive despite the meditative pace of the work. The audiovisual counterpoint created tension and challenged the audioviewer. In Section I (from 00:55:00 to 01:55:00), a train is heard approaching from right to left. The screen is split horizontally in three bands, depicting something not perfectly recognisable, maybe trees. The elements in the divided screen sections slide slowly; is that the view from the train window? Who is travelling in this abstract landscape, and where? In Section II (from 02:00:00 to 03:43:00), a perfectly recognisable seascape, with a cloudy sky at dusk, integrates with an abstract soundscape mixed with the sound of processed sea waves. The beach is deserted; only a lonely fisherman is barely noticeable. Where did humans go? The effect is haunting and renders a sense of alienation.

These are just a couple of examples that show how powerful intermedial interference can be in creating meaning and meta-narratives. Nobody is telling a story, but anyone encountering this audiovisual work could construct one. The same audioviewer attending the piece another time could have a different perceptual experience, discovering other meaningful details and imagining a different narrative.

On the other hand, the audiovisual harmony, achieved by integrating non-processed sounds with non-processed footage, contributed to the sense of relaxation. This happens in the Prelude (from 00:16:00 to 00:50:00) and a few other times, although briefly, like opening a

window on unequivocal diegesis. Intermedial interference works differently here because what we see and hear does not conflict; it is an “expected” perceptual experience. These moments were essential for the general equilibrium of the piece. They were designed to counterbalance the tensive moments, even though there was often a substrate of perceivable contrast obtained with material conflicting with the dominant mood, e.g., a layer of ambiguous processed sounds under a consonant audiovisual relationship (from 04:50:00 to 04:55:00; from 05:42:00 to 05:45:00; from 05:53:00 to 05:55:00).

4.5.4. Implications for Future Pieces

With *Studio II - della natura della Trasformazione*, I discovered that it is possible to use even stricter time-based shared common features of media to develop intermedial combination and integration of the moving image and sound. The findings revealed that using an underlying temporal grid derived from a predetermined numerical series, such as the Fibonacci sequence, helped structure the piece at the macro and micro levels. This could allow the composition to be experienced in a balanced and formally articulated way. However, the Fibonacci sequence acted as an invisible feature. As already argued for *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento* (par. 4.3.3, p.76) and *Absence - Présence* (par. 4.4.3, p.81), a predetermined time-based shared common media feature did not produce intermedial interference directly. In addition, this study investigated several types of interaction between the media materials and their features, creating diverse combinations of audiovisual counterpoint and harmony. This concurrent compositional strategy revealed forms of media interaction helpful in developing intermedial interference.



Fig. 7: Still from *Studio III - Space and Colour*

4.6. *Studio III - Space and Colour*

4.6.1. Compositional Intentions and Aims

From the previous study, I discovered to what extent audiovisual combination and integration can be achieved when a significantly restrictive time-based shared common media feature is used. Furthermore, various interactions between media materials were explored using audiovisual counterpoint and harmony. This further compositional strategy unveiled instances of media interaction conducive to intermedial interference. In *Studio III - Space and Colour*, I investigated the development of audiovisual relationships in a compositional context where the sound and the moving image share non-time-based common features of space and colour saturation. Space in terms of the moving image is understood as the manipulation of the represented space in the shots, whereas colour saturation is achieved through out-of-focus and blurring footage subsequently heavily manipulated in colour. Space in terms of music is understood as the manipulation of the aural space using binaural audio mixing techniques. At the same time, colour saturation in music is related to using filtered, coloured, and saturated sound spectra. With this composition, I explored another way to develop media integration, interaction, and intermedial interference using non-time-based shared common features of media.

4.6.2. Contents and Compositional Plan

Audiovisual materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Camera sourced footage - concrete visual material; considerable manipulation achieved by saturation, blurring, and represented space.• Real sound recordings - concrete sounds; considerable manipulation achieved by filtering, distortion, and aural space positioning.
Compositional assumptions, rules, and strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For the moving image, the use of colour saturation, out-of-focus, blurring and represented space manipulation.• For the music, the use of filtered, coloured, and saturated sound spectra moved around the aural space.• Binaural mixing tools have been used to escape the simple stereophonic sound placement and enhance the spatial listening experience.

Table 5: *Studio III - Space and Colour* contents and compositional plan

4.6.3. Critical Commentary

In this study, I experimented with controlling the interaction of shared common features of media and their manipulation to create intermedial interference in the compositional process. Although electroacoustic music and visual arts have different ways of integrating their features into their expressive languages, space and colour saturation can be related between the two media through specific parameters. Sound can be placed in the aural/listening space through diffusion with different audio formats. The audiovisual compositions, integral to this practice-based research, are stereophonic so far. With stereophony, sound can be placed in the listening field from left to right with intermediate degrees of positioning. It can be widespread, enhancing the stereophonic effect, or reduced to monophony; it can be significantly filtered with different techniques or saturated (coloured). With these elaborations, the composer can enhance particular parts of a sound spectrum, moving it from the background to the foreground and simulating the visual depth of field. Binaural mixing techniques help improve spatial perception without using a multichannel mixing and listening audio setup.

Similarly, the moving image can be processed to manipulate the represented space. This can be achieved by blurring and out-of-focus techniques, applying visual distortion, or splitting the screen into multiple areas. The footage can also be processed and transformed regarding colour saturation, obtaining a wide range of colour effects, from a monochromatic image to a colourful and hyper-saturated one.

Linking a monophonic sound to a monochromatic image is a straightforward device I used to establish audiovisual relationships and interaction between media features, creating intermedial interference. Spatially wide and saturated sounds were combined with blurred and colour-saturated video footage.

In the first four minutes and twenty seconds of the study, the focus was on non-narrative but representational footage featuring flowers as the primary visual subject. The sound palette comprised instrumental sounds such as violin and acoustic guitar, organic sounds like water and stones, and a few environmental sounds. Soundscapes become more predominant in the second half of the study, between the four-minute and thirty-second mark and the end. All the sounds have been significantly processed to align with the fundamental concept of the study. I established my approach to processing soundscapes based on my previous work, *Studio II* -

della Natura della Trasformazione. The degree of surrogacy continuously oscillated from low to high, producing perceptual ambiguity and eliciting interest in listening.

The composition features a specific type of split-screen, a triptych, where two different aspect ratios are joined together. This was present at the composition's inception: a sketch I drew before even shooting can be found in the Autoethnographic journal (see Appendix 1, Fig. 9), and a still from the final film, matching that sketch, can be found at the beginning of this section (p.88). This is characteristic of the whole composition and often reoccurs. It was helpful to experiment with sound placement, synchronic audiovisual movements, and differing degrees of audiovisual saturation and desaturation to observe how the media interacted, creating intermedial interference.

From the beginning of the piece, the audiovisual relationship is evident. I experimented with diverse types of media feature interactions: far away sounds come forward, integrating a desaturated close-up of a flower approaching from a black background towards the audioviewer (from 00:20:00 to 01:10:00). The sound is significantly filtered and placed in the centre; its spectrum and reverb change as it moves closer in sync with the visual. The flower was framed as a vertical shot, but in reality, it was the central section of a full 16:9 shot. After this initial audiovisual gesture, the composition features a very colour-saturated and contrasted image of flowers interacting with an extremely wide sound image (from 01:12:00 to 02:03:18). In general, this kind of media integration, fusion, and behaviour continues until the end of the study's first half. However, at 02:03:20 and 03:30:20, I split the screen, introducing a central vertical frame depicting desaturated close-ups of flowers. The sound also changes with close and filtered sound objects strictly placed in the centre of the aural space, matching the visuals. I wanted to create a perceptual fracture in the middle of the audiovisual space.

The second half of the study features a similar compositional strategy (from 04:52:00 to 07:25:00), but there is a change in the audiovisual material. The perceptual experience widens because of the shift from close-ups to landscape shots and soundscapes. I purposely changed the audiovisual perspective to observe whether the media interaction and subsequent intermedial interference produced a similar outcome in the audiovisual experience. The work re-proposes floral visual material showing different motion characteristics in the third section (from 07:30:00). The sound palette here is richer than in the beginning, with a mimetic

behaviour in certain passages and integrated instrumental, organic, and soundscape sound objects. The split-screen experimental feature is re-proposed in each section of the study with its distinctive audiovisual relationship and behaviour (05:15:12; 06:55:20; 07:30:00; 08:13:00; 09:34:15).

Despite the change in audiovisual perspective, the perceptual experience that arises from the intermedial interference is consistent. The bonding established through the preconceived compositional strategy, concerning non-time-based shared common features of media, creates a solid referential framework around which the compositional discourse revolves. Perceptual attention is drawn to the relationships created by applying my concept of associative mapping previously defined in this exegesis (par. 2.4.7, p.52), as an extension of Garro's (2012) continuum of gestural audio vs visual association strategies. Interest and expectation are elicited every time the vision encounters the triptych screen. When the central part of the shot moves, appearing or disappearing in sync with paired sound features, or the two side panels behave similarly, the interference between media features creates a more expansive perceptual space that the mind is free to explore in search of meaning. Tension and relaxation have been managed primarily through sound work that rendered a more detailed perceptual experience in time.

In two parts of this audiovisual composition, I intentionally challenged the non-narrative conception of my works using mimetic sound features that are strongly narrative-eliciting. The first moment is around 00:04:30, when the camera shows a close-up of daffodils from a low point of view. An expanded soundscape with birds and insects is heard, but I mixed the sound of stone friction and a few footsteps on gravel into the music. This can be disorienting and questioning because those sounds are almost subliminal and abstract. It could make someone think of an individual approaching and create a possible narrative. The second part is around 00:06:56. In the triptych's central panel, a distant coloured boat sailing on a blue sea is visible while the rocks and sky are desaturated. A boat horn is heard twice, along with a sea soundscape with seagulls. This undeniably functions as a meta-narrative trigger.

There is a downside to this study that sparked a meaningful reflection and deserves further consideration. I discovered that to have a whole perceptual experience and a fulfilling encounter with this type of intermedial composition, the simple stereophonic listening experience is not enough. Filmic multichannel mixes and more significant sound diffusion

systems should be the minimum requirement to expand the perceptual experience. Three-dimensional sound projection should be used and experimented with to support these works effectively, even though this may unbalance traditional mono-channel video projection. A cinematic wide screen should be employed. A binaural mix proved to be the right choice to render the correct integrated spatial experience more effectively for this type of intermedial audiovisual composition.

4.6.4. Implications for Future Pieces

Similarly to *Absence - Présence*, this study investigated the interaction of non-time-based common features of media, such as space and colour saturation, to create intermedial bonding between medial materials, producing noticeable intermedial interference through designated interactions (associative mapping).

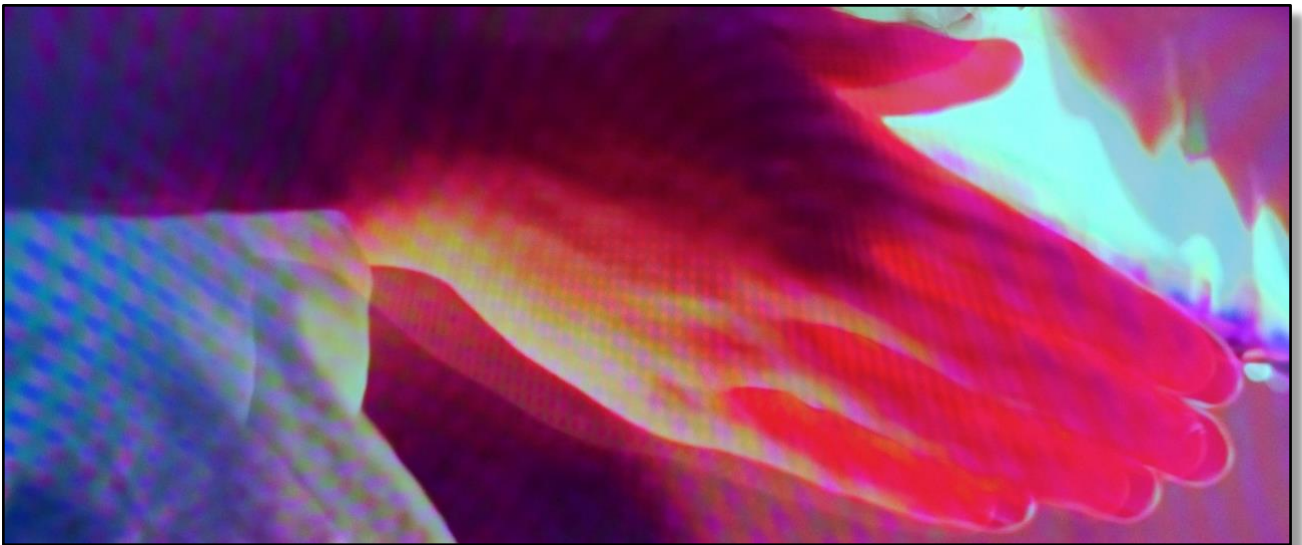


Fig. 8: Stills from *An Angel as a Flame of Fire*

4.7. *An Angel as a Flame of Fire*

4.7.1. Compositional Intentions and Aims

For the composition of the sixth study, I had a body of intermedial audiovisual compositional strategies and methods available as a summation and development of all the previous studies. This study's first and principal subject of investigation concerned which type of media features such diverse medial material could share, considering that, besides footage and sound, the plan included shots of art and cinema books, the photos displayed in these books, and poetry reading. Furthermore, it investigated how all those medial materials from various sources could be included and interact in the same context to create intermedial interference. The aim of this study was the creation of a multi-faceted audiovisual composition where several different medial materials were employed to develop the combination, integration, and fusion of the moving image and music.

4.7.2. Contents and Compositional Plan

Audiovisual materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Camera sourced footage - concrete visual material; shots of landscape and art and cinema books.• Remediated footage from Andrej Tarkovskij's films.• Instrumental and vocal sound recordings - concrete sounds; spoken poetic verses recordings adapted from Tarkovskij's film dialogues.
Compositional assumptions, rules, and strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For the visual, various and diverse materials coming from different medial forms of expression are integrated into a unique compositional strategy.• For the sound, a palette of instrumental (electric guitar, steel tongue drum, lyre, and chanting) and organic soundscape recordings.• A set of chords and melodies drawn by the <i>Andrej Rublëv</i> (1966) music soundtrack is deployed to establish the composition's melodic/harmonic foundation.

Table 6: *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* contents and compositional plan

4.7.3. Critical Commentary

The final Portfolio study was planned to employ a broader range of media. Besides original footage and sound, I wanted to use remediated shots from Tarkovskij's films. This audiovisual composition's artistic and poetic premise concerns a heartfelt homage to Tarkovskij, one of my favourite film directors. I included medial forms of expression such as shots of art and cinema books, the photos displayed on their pages, and poetic interpretations combined with all the other media in the compositional process. Integrating a few other different media into my intermedial compositional strategy represented a significant challenge because each of them has specific modalities for managing and organising expressive materials.

The main focus of the investigation in this work was the control of each of the different medial materials and their integration into a single creative project. To this end, this study's principal subject of inquiry concerns which types of features all those media types can share. Moreover, the investigation also concerns how medial materials from various sources can be included in the same context and create intermedial interference that is helpful in producing diverse and new modalities of fruition, perceptual experience, and knowledge.

When I started organising and laying down the composition foundations, I discovered that the remediated shots from Tarkovskij's films created a broader network of references that might also depend on the audience's acquaintance with his filmography; the same might be said for the manipulation of dialogue excerpts from his *Mirror* (1975). The way I integrated that specific material into the compositional process required a different treatment from my original footage. Although they are filmic shots like the others, I consider them distinct because of their intrinsic way of conveying meaning: they bear with them traces of the visual and textual meaning belonging to the original movie. The piece was structured into movements because it was the most effective and sensible way to conduct the study and allow all the material to interact better expressively. I grouped the diverse footage and sounds based on their shared common features of media, primarily expressive and non-time-based as in *Absence - Présence* and regarded as conceptual and poetic bondings.

In the first movement, visual subjects share similar media features, such as Tarkovskij's silver birches from *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) and my silver birches in Arne Woods. In this movement, sound mimetic features link to the visual features as they share similar environmental origins. In the second movement, the visual subject is books. Books, as a

medial form of expression, have various modes to convey meaning. However, the unifying carrier medium is video. Tarkovskij's books and mine share similar and identical subjects in one case, i.e., Leonardo Da Vinci's artworks and Russian icon pictures. In the second movement, one of my books shows pictures of the history of cinema linked to Tarkovskij's life-events and mine. The books show mostly pictures in this section of the work. The textual element has minimal presence, and its significance is only determined by specific years shown in the images. Therefore, photos displayed on the pages of the books are also a medial form of expression used in the second movement. Sounds have mimetic features, exclusively derived from turning pages or other sounds produced from paper. Even though highly processed and detached from the original sources, they retain those mimetic and gestural features. On these premises, I established intermedial links by combining them with the moving images of the books.

At the moment of integrating all the media at the compositional stage, the predetermined groupings (via associative mapping) helped produce intermedial interference through the interaction of shared media features, which impressed direction to the composition discourse and created a potential meaningful experience for the audience. The composition structure encompasses a prologue and three movements of about eleven minutes of duration in total.

Everything in *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* is inspired and driven by Tarkovskij's audiovisual poetics; my original footage is related explicitly or implicitly to his. Tarkovskij's visual poetry integrates long, dreamlike, and slow-paced sequences, often landscapes juxtaposed with symbolic images, through which he explores spiritual and metaphysical themes. His poetic style resonates with my artistic intuitions. In this work, there are a significant number of citations and references to his films, from the obvious imagery and dialogue excerpts to the almost undetectable biographical and musical references, the use of the typeface and colour of one of his film titles, and the use of natural audiovisual elements so often represented in Tarkovskij's movies. The use of remediated passages from Tarkovskij's films was embedded in my artistic idea from its inception.

Remediation, as such, is a practice that has been consciously used in media production of any sort for several years and "refers to a historical process through which newer media forms interact with earlier ones" (Bolter 2008). However, it is a creative practice used in the arts for centuries and in music through various techniques such as paraphrasing and citation.

Remediation creates an ambivalent relationship between the new and old medial forms. The creators of the new form borrow elements from the older one. They also claim, implicitly or explicitly, that their new medial artefacts are somehow better, more authentic or realistic (Bolter 2008). In my approach, I intended remediation as a creative device with two different but connected aspects. On the one hand, it was a way to recall the source of inspiration, refer to it, and establish the foundations of a fabric to build the composition discourse. On the other hand, it was a way to discover the perceptual connections between my personal memories and those of Tarkovskij that resonate through his visual imagery.

Tarkovskij struggled considerably to pull *Mirror* (1975) together, changing the script and editing many times. Ultimately, he let the movie flow freely (Tarkovskij 2019). *Mirror* (1975) is an example of a film where a predominant non-linear narrative is intertwined with a non-narrative exploration of poetic imagery and concepts and where the audience experiences a continuum of unrelated images, memories, and very personal childhood references. I decided to proceed in composing the piece using the same approach Tarkovskij had at the time. In the creative process, I allowed myself and the composition to stream spontaneously in recalling and linking Tarkovskij's and my memories by analogy.

Regarding the common features shared by the diverse media, the way I selected and mapped them was similar to my approach in *Absence - Présence* but even more unrestricted. Tarkovskij's films often focus on childhood themes, at least in the movies I considered. Childhood memories are a visual and sonic feature of *An Angel as a Flame of Fire*, too. Furthermore, all my original footage depicts similar subjects to Tarkovskij's; sometimes, they share what I perceive as emotional content. A comprehensive table illustrating the mapping criteria of the shared media features, based on visual analogies and similarities, can be consulted in Appendix 1, in the *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* section (p.145, Fig. 14).

The final mix of *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* is a 5.1. Working on this piece, I reinforced my conviction that at least a multichannel soundtrack is needed to deliver a comprehensive experience for the audience and facilitate the encounter with this kind of intermedial audiovisual composition. I discovered that an immersive sound experience that more closely reflects how we perceive reality audiovisually is more effective in creating a higher level of intermedial interference and, hence, a higher level of engagement. I planned to experiment with the Ambisonics format in the future and possibly re-mix *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* in

that format. However, enhancing the sonic experience to this level without enhancing the visual counterpart could produce an imbalance in the perceptual experience. This is food for thought to allow advancements in this practice-based research field and artistic practice.

The prologue and three movements of *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* show different expressive materials, compositional strategies, and styles. Therefore, the intermedial interference that results from the interaction of all diverse media relies on their specific shared common features. In the prologue (from 00:30:00 to 01:36:00), I introduce the composition's general intent using original shots of a garden bin on fire and remediated footage for the visual. Fire, as a natural and symbolic element, is the key factor that holds the section together. The music presents other essential components that will recur throughout the composition. Sounds of flipping pages, a scribbling pencil on a sheet of paper, and crumpled paper are the concrete sonic elements. A processed electric guitar, a choral passage, and dialogue lines from a *Mirror* (1975) sequence processed using granular time stretching and reverse techniques complete the sound palette. All the harmonic and melodic materials of the piece are derived from a choral track in the *Andrej Rublëv* score (Ovchinnikov 1966) (track n. 15). The recited line is from the same scene as the used shots. In the prologue music, gestural moments stand out against a textural background; slow motion and time stretching act as a unifying compositional device that fuses visual and sound. The interaction of original and remediated footage based on symbolic elements creates potent interference, with the support of mimetic sounds that are highly effective in eliciting a prominent synchresis effect that amplifies intermedial interference.

The following three movements had been planned to investigate intermedial interference and balance using distinct compositional strategies and styles concerning audiovisual relationships. It is not fundamental for the audience to know the exact origin of the source material, even though the remediation is explicit and referenced in the final titles. However, the remediation process has been an artistic and poetic device important to the composer in designing and creating the artefact. In all three cases, the findings are satisfactory and open up reflection and future opportunities to devise intermedial compositional methods.

In the first movement (from 01:57:00 to 05:33:00), the combination of abstract and ambiguous soundscapes and referential sound objects (children's voices) was employed to create a meta-narrative effect through synchresis and voice narrativity. The visual combines

original footage and remediated shots from *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) based on a shared subject, i.e., silver birch trees. However, there is still a high order of abstraction and surrogacy both in the visual and the sound, where the choice of using a black-and-white look and targeted blurring effect plays a significant role. The whole movement encourages the exploration of a physical natural environment through a walk in the woods; at the same time, it facilitates the investigation of an unconscious space where childhood memories and emotions are buried. Shared visual and sound media features have a symbolic and metaphorical nature. When we experience the passages from the contemporary woods to the Tarkovskij one, we transit with a flicker effect and lyre arpeggio (e.g., 02:45:00) in order to take us to another perceptual dimension inhabited by a new acousmatic presence (children). Intermedial interference in the first movement effectively creates an immersive perceptual experience, conveying multi-layered interpretations of possible significations.

In the second movement (05:59:00), an abstract approach is employed using the split-screen technique for the video and spectral and spatial processing techniques for the sound objects that primarily feature third-order surrogacy (Smalley 1997, p.112). The visual subject is representational (books and photos), whereas the sound objects originate from paper and have mimetic qualities abstracted from reality, which create bonds with the visuals through synchresis: a mimetic discourse with an abstracted syntax (Emmerson 1986). However, sometimes, the visual drives the syntactic organisation of sounds, making the syntax lean towards more abstract structuration. The compositional strategy deploys an explicit gestural behaviour in the classical style of acousmatic music.

The movement begins with remediated footage from *The Sacrifice* (1986), where a girl looking out of a window sits down and opens a book on Russian icons. As opposed to the original, my shot is reversed, which is possibly noticeable in the last few frames (06:18:11). The visual discourse is mimetic, but the syntax is abstract as I force the material to comply with a preconceived visual idea. The music in this short introduction presents once again an abstracted soundscape, processed and spatialised, and a processed choral take. This introduction functions as a bridge and creates expectations using reoccurring sounds and a familiar visual look that contributes to audiovisual coherence. The interference of audible and visible media features produces expectation. The opening acts as a trigger to the principal core of the movement, where the original and remediated footage share a common subject

(06:19:00). All the shots are considered visual objects contributing to the compositional form and discourse. The symbolic and metaphorical meanings of the audiovisual subjects are evident. The interaction of the visual and sound media features produces intermedial interference that stands out and elicits a myriad of possible meanings and interpretations; it is reinforced by using audiovisual compositional devices such as material accumulation and multiplication, flicker effect with sound granulation, and the use of PSP and SSP techniques. Tension, release, and surprise were generated by rhythmically blacking out some split screens (07:35:17 and 07:44:11), creating another level of audiovisual interaction and intermedial interference. Dynamic progression was also created by the interference of the sound dynamics and the multiplication of visual elements. Looking after and maintaining balance in this movement was paramount. It took many attempts in the compositional process to achieve a satisfactory equilibrium between all the audiovisual components.

The third movement (08:28:00) employs a different strategy concerning audiovisual relationships. It features an intimate and enveloping atmosphere by avoiding bass frequencies and using an almost diegetic soundscape. The vision of a calm marine landscape and the concepts of dawn/childhood and dusk/old age conceptually shape the audiovisual relationship and behaviour of the whole movement. Moreover, the intervention of poetry as a further contributing expressive medium to the final artefact adds another layer of complexity to consider in intermedial thinking. In this movement, the original and remediated footage was processed using multiple visual superimpositions, transparencies, shot multiplications, and extreme slow motion (09:03:02). Considering and applying balance was a crucial factor in achieving visual equilibrium. The placement and reframing of the overlaid shots with a thorough evaluation of contrast and colour interaction was one of the most challenging tasks.

The interaction of poetry (text) with visual and sound media is highly effective regarding the intermedial interference it creates (from 08:48:15 to the end). The presence of human voices that convey textual meaning is a pole of inevitable attraction. Chion (1999, p.5) states that “the presence of a human voice structures the sonic space that contains it.” The voice holds a special status among all the auditory components in audiovisual media, exerting a hierarchical influence on everything else. In films and similar media, voices take priority over all other elements. For this reason, to achieve what I discovered is a better balance among all the medial materials, I treated the voices as sound objects. I displaced them from the central channel,

moved with panning and delays, and then did not attempt to better synchronise the male voice with the female, creating a rhythmic counterpoint. The final outcome creates a perceptual experience where all the elements contribute in an equal way to the creation of signification. Intermedial interference and balance shaped a meaningful and multifaceted experience in the intermedial space.

In conclusion, I would add a few more reflections about the relationship I created between the music and the visuals in this latest composition and an insight into my vision as an intermedial composer in general. In the first movement, music and sound exhibit metadiegetic features (Gorbman 1987, p.22); in the second movement, nondiegetic features; and in the third, diegetic features, at least regarding the soundscape layers' relationship with the moving image. These diverse audiovisual relationships create three very different perceptual experiences. After creating my audiovisual compositions, analysing them to understand whether intermedial interference acted as a significant element in the compositional process, and how that might be the case, was complex and required careful consideration. Auto-analysis is not always a successful and straightforward procedure. Chion (1994, p.185) states that audiovisual analysis is undertaken for a few reasons: one of them is "aesthetic refinement". In hindsight, I found that as a composer, I have sought to realise my idea of beauty in composing *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* and all the other audiovisual works. I achieved this through the conscious use of constructive intermedial interference and balance. One of my aims was to produce something pleasing to the eye and the ears. For the eye, I identified a few key factors contributing to creating a pleasant experience: image composition, colour harmonisation, and visual contrast. On the other hand, for the ears: sonic details, internal timbral motions, balance between gestural and textural elements, and space perception.

*A Poet is called upon to provoke a spiritual jolt,
and not to cultivate idolaters.*

Andrej Tarkovskij from Mirror (1975)

5. Conclusion

5.1. Summary of the Research Processes and Aims

In this practice-based research, the production of a body of works revealed new knowledge concerning the development of intermedial relationships between music and the moving image within the context of electroacoustic audiovisual composition. The research was grounded in the artistic practice of intermedial audiovisual composition, which combines electroacoustic music and moving images in an integrated way rather than subordinating sound and music to a secondary, accompanying role.

The research explored how the novel concept of intermedial interference could be applied in electroacoustic audiovisual composition to create new works. The core research question was:

How can the concept of intermedial interference be applied to create new audiovisual works?

A supporting secondary question concerning balance also emerged during the research.

How can the concept of balance be used to inform emerging creative strategies?

Additionally, a third reflective question arose:

How has this inquiry changed or informed my understanding of audiovisual composition?

To answer these questions, compositional strategies to control different medial materials and their integration in a single creative project were proposed. As a result, insights, compositional methods, and new potential techniques—that contribute new knowledge to the field of intermedial audiovisual composition—have emerged through the production of a Portfolio of compositions and an exegesis, both integral components of the contribution.

The research explored how medial materials from various sources can be included and controlled in the same context to generate intermedial interference through the interaction of shared common features of media, thus creating a network of complex and layered meanings open to different levels of interpretation by the audience. Interference can produce diverse and new modalities of fruition in an audiovisual composition; it can generate new meaningful perceptual experiences through constructive audiovisual interference while maintaining

balance and coherence, casting light, and contributing to further knowledge in this artistic research and practice domains.

The methodological approach comprised two interlinked components: artistic practice and autoethnographic narrative. The former encompasses producing a Portfolio of audiovisual compositions, in which the intermedial interference concept has been applied and explored. The audiovisual works were composed by adopting electroacoustic music properties with a *musique concrète* approach for the soundtrack, and *concrète* visual material for visual. The autoethnographic narrative contextualises and critically explores the creative process and findings. The research processes also included a literature and contextual review, contextual analysis, and critical interpretive analysis. Appendices and critical commentaries present extensive reflective documentation of experiments, aims, challenges, discoveries, and crucial decisions made during the creative process. The exegesis synthesises insights from the Portfolio, and, through an autoethnographic narrative, reveals the development of knowledge and strategies in the domain of intermedial audiovisual composition. This research aimed to enhance the understanding of audiovisual composition and develop novel approaches to intermedial composition in academia, the community of audiovisual composers, and the broader artistic community.

5.2. Main Original Contribution and Findings

This research proposes a novel theoretical framework underpinning the creation, evaluation, and analysis of audiovisual compositions. Expanding upon existing literature and artistic practice, this framework highlights intermedial interference's crucial role in combining, integrating, and fusing sound, music, and the moving image in audiovisual composition, delineating how diverse media features interfere constructively or destructively within the intermedial space. By exploring interactions between media features, this study provides insights into audiovisual composition's creative, technical, and artistic aspects and how these aspects can be effectively combined and manipulated to produce meaningful perceptual experiences in intermedial artworks. In conjunction with the practical exploration through a Portfolio of compositions, it emphasises the intricate balance required for cohesive audiovisual experiences.

The application of the concept of intermedial interference was investigated through the compositional process. I explored many ways of knowingly approaching the integration of

shared common features of media to create intermedial interference. Bonds between audio and visual elements were generated through associative mapping and by exploring the interaction of shared media features, such as: rhythm, motion, conceptual links, non-time-based associations, and accurate synchronisation. This research process resulted in a collection of works that exhibit peculiar and original audiovisual characteristics to the audience that may be interpreted as the result of the conceptualised phenomenon. The main findings suggest that intermedial interference can be both beneficial and detrimental to the audiovisual composition process. I discovered that the successful integration of sound and the moving image requires an all-inclusive approach involving the balanced mutual influence of all compositional components.

The main original contribution to knowledge in the field of audiovisual composition is the discovery and definition of a novel phenomenological concept. A phenomenon is an occurrence that is observed and experienced through the senses; it is empirical in nature. The intermedial interference phenomenon was experienced and observed by encountering a broad and diverse range of audiovisual compositions and through compositional work. The observation was abstracted to define, explain, and conceptualise the phenomenon as the interaction of different media features in the intermedial space. Intermedial interference can be characterised as either constructive or destructive. The research through compositional practice suggests that intermedial interference happens in the intermedial space through the interaction of media features and can be strategically controlled in the compositional process.

In order to define the concept of intermedial interference, it was necessary to consider the interaction of the different media contributing to the final artefact. The focus was not on the media per se as physical entities but on their expressive characteristics. Therefore, the concept of media features was defined as the all-encompassing, expressive traits related to form and content at macro and microstructural levels.

The evaluation and acknowledgement of the importance of applying balance in the compositional process was fundamental. The combination and integration of different media, the interaction of their shared common features, and the resulting intermedial interference often needed careful adjustments to maintain equilibrium between elements. A constant process of balance and re-balance of media presence, changing the interaction of their common expressive traits, was explored during the compositional process to reach

satisfactory results. The complexity of balancing different media in their interaction to avoid overloading and obfuscating the audience's reception, while also allowing constructive interference to create a meaningful perceptual experience, was highlighted. The findings underline the crucial role of balancing diverse media elements and intentionally mapping shared media features, allowing composers to shape intermedial relationships in their creative works strategically. This links to the broader challenge of achieving coherence in complex intermedial works. A proposed solution was to create greater audience engagement through immersive audio that renders the sonic experience more similar to human perception. However, enhancements to the visual dimension may also be required.

An original compositional method based on recognising specific synchronisation techniques was defined. The taxonomy of synchronisation strategies (PSPs and SSPs), an innovative contribution from this research, provides a structured approach for intentionally designing or discovering audiovisual synchronicity. This technique is part of an overarching compositional method comprising other processes such as temporal media manipulation, metric montage, balance application, and associative mapping based on similar media expressive traits.

In the compositional process, I found that the media features interacted effectively, creating constructive interference, when they shared some common expressive traits. These traits can be very different in nature; a range of diverse shared common features of media, such as rhythm, motion, conceptual links, non-time-based associations, and accurate synchronisation, were explored. The study demonstrated that effective intermedial relationships and interference could arise even when different artists separately conceived sound and image materials; this refers to the first case study, *No 7: Color Study*. It was discovered that time-based shared features like adhesion to a temporal grid or metric montage could act subtly, providing invisible formal cohesion rather than overt intermedial effects; this refers to the second and fourth case studies, *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento* and *Studio II - della Natura della Trasformazione*. In order to formally organise the medial material and create effective audiovisual relationships, media features should be linked and mapped in a predetermined compositional plan based on shared similar phenomenological and perceptual attributes or gestural profiles. In this way, the resulting intermedial interference could produce a meaningful perceptual experience. Garro's (2012) continuum of audio-visual strategies was extended by adding the associative mapping key-point, which provided a practical approach

for conceptually linking media features. The interaction of several non-time-based shared common features of media was explored throughout the Portfolio, with a detailed focus on the fifth case study, *Studio III - Space and Colour*. In all the studies, the application of associative mapping contributed significantly to controlling intermedial interference successfully.

The assumption of non-narrativity in the Portfolio compositions was challenged through practice using highly referential visual and sonic material. Referential audiovisual material's influence in creating meta-narratives must be acknowledged despite the non-narrative compositional assumptions. In composing *Absence - Présence* and *An Angel as a Flame of Fire*, I discovered how strongly referential materials, especially human body presence and voices, readily elicited subjective meta-narratives despite the absence of any preconceived storytelling. This demonstrates the audiovisual power to pull perception towards a more cinematic narrative experience when specific elements polarise the audience's attention. This confirmed the literature review in the mimetic visual music and electroacoustic audiovisual composition field (Garro 2012, 2014b, 2015; Hyde 2012).

The research findings on intermedial interference achieved by practice significantly refined my compositional strategies and methods and shifted my attitude in regard to attending and considering audiovisual composition. The main contribution is that the intermedial perspective is now ingrained in my compositional approach, and the research process's outcome informed the change I underwent as a composer.

Additionally, this research extends beyond electroacoustic audiovisual composition, casting light on how intermedial interference can manifest in various audiovisual and multimedia productions, broadening its relevance to a wider range of practitioners who want to gain awareness of a phenomenon that results from combining sound, music, and visual media.

5.3. Limitations of the Research

This practice-based research relies on a limited number of compositions as a field of investigation. It explores the integration, combination, fusion, and interference between electroacoustic music and moving images abstracted from reality in an intermedial context but is restricted to a single practitioner. This aspect might affect generalisation; the research could benefit from future studies involving multiple practitioners or collaborative efforts to

validate findings across different artistic perspectives. While this research contributes to electroacoustic audiovisual composition, its findings might not encompass all audiovisual compositional practices. Expanding the exploration to include other forms or genres of audiovisual composition could enrich the study's comprehensiveness.

The phenomenological experience of intermedial interference is based on perceptually encountering audiovisual compositions and creating a Portfolio of works to experiment with and control that phenomenon in the compositional process. Therefore, it may be subjective to a certain extent, and its observation and interpretation may vary among different practitioners or audiences, potentially impacting the generalisation of the findings.

Intermedial interference is not a measurable phenomenon. Quantifying intermedial interference is a challenging issue since it is a perceptual phenomenon; it derives from the intuition and perceptual experience of the author in encountering many audiovisual compositions and applying this insight to the creative process of audiovisual production. The absence of measurability might limit the ability to empirically validate or quantify the extent of intermedial interference.

The exclusive focus on electroacoustic audiovisual composition may limit the applicability of the findings to other forms of audiovisual or multimedia practices. The exclusion of different artistic expressions involving sound and image may have resulted in a limited understanding and interpretation of intermedial interference. This exclusion might restrict the pertinency of findings beyond this specific domain.

5.4. Developments for Future Work

Exploring intermedial interference in electroacoustic audiovisual composition reveals various directions for future research and artistic exploration. Firstly, expanding this investigation to encompass a broader range of practitioners within the field of audiovisual practices could provide a more nuanced understanding of how different artistic sensibilities approach and manipulate the interaction between sound and the moving image. Collaborative studies involving multiple practitioners might offer diverse perspectives and methods, enriching the discourse on intermedial interference.

Furthermore, extending the research to encompass different genres, forms, or contexts of audiovisual composition could illuminate how intermedial interference operates beyond the

confines of electroacoustic works. Analysing narrative-led audiovisual pieces or exploring the impact of intermedial interference in immersive or interactive environments could yield insights into its applicability across various artistic domains.

The concept of intermedial interference itself deserves deeper theoretical and empirical examination. A more detailed taxonomy or framework that systematically catalogues and analyses various types of intermedial interference might offer a clearer understanding of its nuances and occurrences. Additionally, investigating audience reception and perception through empirical studies or qualitative analyses could provide valuable feedback on how viewers engage with and interpret intermedial artworks.

The technological landscape continually evolves, presenting opportunities for innovative artistic expression. Future research could explore the integration of emerging technologies, such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), sound installations, interactive installations, and expanded exhibition formats, as proposed by Harris (2020, p.282) in her contribution about Expanded Audiovisual Format (EAF), to push the boundaries of intermedial audiovisual composition. Understanding how these technologies interact with the concept of intermedial interference could open new routes for artistic creation and audience engagement.

Finally, bridging the gap between theory and practice by developing pedagogical resources based on this research's insights could contribute to aspiring audiovisual composers' education and training. Sharing methods, techniques, strategies, and conceptual frameworks derived from the study of intermedial interference could inspire and guide future generations of artists in their explorations of sound and moving image relationships.

In conclusion, this research marks not an end but a threshold to many possibilities and paths for further exploration and innovation in the intermedial audiovisual composition context. With these future directions, intermedial interference in audiovisual composition is ready for continuous evolution and transformation, offering fertile ground for creative experimentation, theoretical advancement, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

There are certain areas of feeling and reality—or unreality or innermost yearning, whatever you want to call it—which are notably inaccessible to words. Music can get into these areas. Painting can get into them. Non-verbal forms of expression can. But words are a terrible straitjacket.

Stanley Kubrick (1968)

Appendix 1

Autoethnographic journal: notes and reflections in chronological order

No.7: Color Study

24/10/2016

After thoroughly analysing the original silent film, I started organising the sound material for the soundtrack of *No.7: Color Study* using a low-quality video file downloaded from the internet. I am using/remediating sounds from my previous acousmatic compositions. It will be interesting to note how my perception of their qualities will change and how they will shape the final perception of the film, creating a whole distinct experience, an audiovisual experience.

18/11/2016

I need a better video to submit the composition to festivals and conferences. I will write a detailed analysis later to keep it for future use and discussion in my thesis.

27/12/2016

Is it possible to create an intermedial relationship in a work where the video is entirely preconceived (many years ago) and already edited? Considering my previous experience with *Falling* (Chiaramonte and Cirulli 2011), I discovered the answer is yes, but that composition is a collaborative work. I composed it in close contact and collaboration with the video maker. *No.7: Color Study* is different, as Harry Smith is long gone.

07/01/2017

I completed and wrote the analysis of the visual content of *No.7: Color Study*. It will be beneficial in composing the piece; I will use it in some way for the thesis as a document to show the creative process. I feel it can help me establish a closer connection with the author, understand his concept, and create a meaningful intermedial relationship between the visual and the music. It can function as a storyboard.

02/04/2017

I will suspend my studies for six months. However, I intend to keep working, at least on the composition.

21/07/2017

The piece is almost done; I need a better-quality video.

28/08/2017

I contacted the Harry Smith Archives to get an HQ copy of the film. What I found on the web is ridiculously poor in quality.

10/09/2017

No answer yet from the Archives. I sent them another e-mail.

27/09/2017

No. 7: Color Study has been accepted for screening at Sound / Image 2017 - University of Greenwich.

12/10/2017

I received by post a DVD of Harry Smith's films directly from Rani Singh in Beverly Hills, the curator of the Archives.

17/10/2017

I extracted the HQ video file I needed from the DVD, added opening titles in *Adobe Premier*, and set it in *Pro Tools*, ditching the old working file.

10-11/11/2017

I attended the Sound / Image 2017 Colloquium at the University of Greenwich. It was an exciting experience. I have been in contact with many composers and academics.

09/02/2018

No. 7: Color Study has been accepted for screening at Seeing Sound 2018 at Bath SPA University.

12/03/2018

No. 7: Color Study has been accepted for screening at the 2018 New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival.

Studio I - della Natura del Movimento

02/02/2018

It is time to start another project. My first ideas are:

- To edit my own video using free stock footage; I am not yet ready to film my own material.
- To employ concrete sounds from my library, including sounds belonging to previous compositions and new audio recordings. I plan to use metallic sounds from unusual picks of acoustic guitar strings and breath, mouth, and voice sounds.

However, I need to learn how to edit and process (transform) a video. I have access to *Adobe Premiere* version software, which is the only one I can use. I will start by watching online tutorials and seeking help from my friends.

16/03/2018

After talking to a friend and colleague in Italy, he sent me an e-mail with helpful information. He pointed me to a massive library of free stock footage online managed by Mitch Martinez, an American director of photography.

25/03/2018

I downloaded 6.2 GB from the Mitch Martinez website. It is a mix of abstract, textural, and concrete shots, all in 4K.

18/04/2018

I have been experimenting for more than two weeks now. I have a 1-minute-long video draft. Besides this first attempt, I am trying other different video manipulations, such as split screen (I made different grids jpg files in Photoshop and imported them in Premiere as guides), colour inversion (like transforming a shot in its photographic negative), slow motion and so on. I will sensibly edit all these tests, giving the piece structure a form. The form will be more explicit when I match the sounds and the moving image. However, all the video clips I use have movement as a common characteristic. I presented the first version of this attempt to my supervisors during a

meeting on the 5th of April. They challenged me, saying that the two media should be worked together. I am aware of that, but I am entirely new to video and needed and still need some time to learn. I think it was expected that I would start putting together only the footage; the integrated workflow will surely come later in this process.

19/04/2018

I recorded guitar sounds and my voice performing weird sounds.

27/04/2018

I am processing the guitar and voice sounds in *Ableton Live* using several granular processors, including my *Max4Live* device. I am using the plug-ins collection by Michael Norris for the first time, which a colleague suggested a few weeks ago.

03/05/2018

In an (intermedial) electroacoustic audiovisual composition, the extent of emotional involvement might depend on the soundtrack's "musicality" degree. Sound is almost always continuous and present in abstract or non-narrative audiovisual work. However, its effect on the audience might provide a different emphasis range and emotional support. It can span from a limit where the musical organisation of the material is minimal, if not even absent, to the other extreme where the musicality is strongly evident, from a level of structuring as sound design (almost diegetic, I could say, if it were not for the abstract or non-narrative structure of the visual) to another level where the musical organisation of the sonic events over time is clear and determined.

14/05/2018

I read about Eisenstein and his montage theory. When studying for his Cinema History and Criticism Masters degree, I remember my brother talking about it. I watched several of Eisenstein's masterpieces but never deepened the subject. I am reading Eisenstein's (1949) essay "Film Form" and have been struck on the road to Damascus. I plan to experiment with the metric montage theorised by the great director. The concept of the absolute length of the film pieces matches the duration and rhythm of musical events. This is

a common feature the two media can share. It will be interesting to study how the interaction of this common feature (the exact timing and precise durations of sound and video events) will create interference in the intermedial space.

29/05/2018

I started drafting a document to explain and present my artistic intents and technical processes. It will be a long learning process. When finished, I will include that document in an appendix.

15/06/2018

The whole process is tricky and challenging to manage. I am struggling with both the media. I will need to find a better procedure. Maybe it depends on my little experience with video editing and processing, but I also have difficulties finding the right way with the music. At this point, I have to start working in a more integrated way. It is not only a matter of "making" them together but maybe first and foremost of "thinking" them together.

17/08/2018

During the summer break, I kept working on the composition; I just stopped for a few days when I was on holiday in Italy. Now, things are much more apparent, the working process is more integrated, and the piece is reaching a decent stage in its making.

03/10/2018

I presented the first draft of *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento* to my supervisors yesterday. After the projection, we had a fruitful conversation about my work's conceptual, artistic, and technical aspects. This is its final structure:

- 1) Incipit (00:00 – 00:16)
- 2) Intro (00:17 – 2:09)
- 3) The Ocean [Bridge] (2:09 – 2:41)
- 4) Heart on fire (2:41 – 3:12)

5) Fluidity again [bridge and end of the first movement] (3:12 – 3:31)

6) Interlude, it is snowing on my Heart (3:31 – 4:36)

02/11/2018

I started the long and cumbersome procedure of booking technical gear on SiSo. I will also get a tutorial on a Canon 5D camera I can borrow from the University. In the meantime, I learned about an NLE suite called *DaVinci Resolve Studio*. It is an excellent piece of software.

28/11/2018

After more than three weeks, the borrowing procedure is at a dead end. I cannot borrow what I need; at this point, I prefer working on my own, “solo”. I will find my way; I want to get on with total autonomy. I will explore Phoneography, a filming style where only a camera phone is employed, with the possible use of a few additional accessories and lenses. I am increasingly into *DaVinci Resolve Studio*; I asked my supervisors to support me in granting a software license.

Absence - Présence

10/12/2018

Today, I started shooting with my iPhone 8 for my new composition. The shots are simple experiments: a curtain undulating slowly with the wind, linen on a messy bed. The artistic concept is still vague but is gradually forming. It is about love relationships, loss, and grief caused by separation.

22/12/2018

I had the last supervisory meeting of the year. I told my supervisors I would like to use *DaVinci Resolve Studio* for my practice and asked them to support me with the request. I decided that *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento* is complete, even though it was meant to be the first movement of a more extended and articulated composition. I will start the new year with the plan of a new composition to present for my Major Review, which is due next year. I am already filming with my iPhone, editing and processing the video in *DaVinci Resolve* (free version). I will try to use the *DaVinci Resolve DAW (Fairlight)* to compose and edit the music. One of the best *DaVinci Resolve* features is integrating all the tools I need into a single software environment for my work. I will not have to switch software anymore to complete different tasks.

16/02/2019

Yesterday, I had a gratifying shooting session with my partner. She kindly agreed to be a model for my new audiovisual composition. I experimented with in-focus-out-of-focus shots. I do not know yet whether it would be better to control the out-of-focus effect in post-production; I will see. I am using the *Filmic Pro* app, which is, at the moment, one of the best professional camera apps on the market. It gives you a lot of control over exposure and focus. I started collecting pictures from renowned photographers in the *Pinterest* app in the last few days. The common feature that all these pictures have is blurring. This aesthetic strongly attracts me, and I will try to reproduce that misty, blurry effect in my shots, especially for

the representation of the human body. For me, the out-of-focus effect is related to my distant memories, distant in space and time.

04/03/2019

The artistic idea and the kind of audiovisual relationship I want to establish are pretty clear now. How can I manage the assumption of a non-narrative, semi-abstract compositional approach with the evident presence of a human being in the footage? Indeed, I do not have any script to start from. There is no preconceived storytelling at the foundation of the work, and I intend to stay this way. However, I have to investigate the outcome of the audiovisual interaction from an intermedial point of view. What kind of experience (I mean narrative experience) will be elicited by sound and music synchronised with those specific shots where a woman is visible, although blurry? The presence of a person in a filmic montage is indeed a powerful trigger for narrative. My mind would immediately try to figure out a story, depending on what I see before and after that presence and the sounds I hear, no matter the assumption. What's happening? Why is she doing that? Why does she seem sad or happy?

21/03/2019

Today, I got confirmation from the Licensing Team in IT about my *DaVinci Resolve Studio* License. Spring is bearing good news.

05/04/2019

Recently, the composition's title revealed itself almost out of the blue. I know there is a reason why it was pretty easy. It is not the casual result of an attempt to combine words. The process was quite natural and quick. I know there is a deep emotional relationship between the initial ideas, the first shots I filmed as an experiment, my current personal situation, memories from the past and the link to the choice of using the French language. However, it is complex to explain and rationalise. *Absence - Présence* is the title. The way I experienced my relationships, deepest interconnected feelings, visual and sonic memories, love and happiness, loss and parting, absence and presence, the very first love of my life.

19/04/2019

After almost four months, I had a supervisory meeting. I introduced my supervisors to a silent visual edit of one and a half minutes. They pointed out again the risks of working on the visual without provisional sound. I intend to carry on working on and composing the two media together. However, I still need time to figure out the video technicalities and enjoy all the new learning. I cannot stop working on the visual; it is like a drug. The artistic concept is solid, and I will soon integrate the visual with sound; making sound is much easier for me, and I know exactly what I want and how to do it.

17/06/2019

The *Absence - Présence* video is almost done. I am working on the music, but I find it hard, extremely hard. I know what I want, the sounds, gestures, direction, and audiovisual relationship, but it seems I am wandering around hopelessly in an unknown and desolate land. This is not related to the method I am adopting. Yes, I started by making the film first, or at least a first provisional cut of it. Thinking intermedially does not mean you have to do everything simultaneously. You do not cut a few shots together while composing a clarinet passage. That is not possible, for me, at least. What I noticed and am developing is to create a dialogue, a relationship between the two media. You must have a solid artistic concept, audiovisual material related to that concept and the ability to express it, and a general structure, which can be refined working in progress. Then, you have to develop the appropriate strategy in order to control the compositional process organically to integrate and manage all the material within the project. That does not mean at the same time, i.e., synchronically.

04/07/2019

I am interrupting my official course of studies. I will be back on track in October. However, I will keep working on the *Absence - Présence* music, at least selecting and organising the material.

03/10/2109

My interruption of studies ends today.

15/11/2019

Two days ago, I had my first supervisory meeting after deferral. It was an update on my literature review and a chat on the compositional work in progress.

13/12/2019

Today, I recorded the singer's voice. She sang the melody I wrote for the piece in several different ways. I call it the *sirens' chant*, which will be the dominant sonic feature of a section of the composition. I also recorded my partner's voice uttering a few words underlying the artistic concept of the piece. I recorded her giggling, uttering incomprehensible words, and murmuring. I am integrating the compositional material with another medial form of expression, the speaking voice. This is another good point for reflection. I will incorporate and present visual material referring to a human being and a human voice at the same time. This is, again, solid referential "human" material that will elicit some "story" in the viewer without the piece being intentionally and formally narrative.

09/01/2020

The composition is getting on well. The workflow is smooth, even though I still use two software running simultaneously on my workstation: *DaVinci Resolve* for editing, colouring, and processing the moving image, and *Pro Tools* for the sound. I do not have time to learn *Fairlight*, the *DaVinci Resolve's* integrated DAW well. *Pro Tools* is so natural to me and easy to use. I move back and forth from one environment to another, modifying some cuts in the video and generating new provisional edits. Then I import them into *Pro Tools*, change the music or compose new passages, and then back to *DaVinci Resolve*. However, now, the two media interact and influence each other fruitfully. I must finalise *Absence - Présence* and start working on the Major Review.

20/01/2020

My Pinterest photo library is now massive, and I named the collection *Blur*. Over two hundred pictures are divided into three categories: Sven Pfrommer, Bill Armstrong, and a general Female Body. The influence of those photos on the aesthetic of *Absence - Présence* is remarkable. I am happy I could develop a solid and consistent visual style in my work, managing the *DaVinci Resolve* Colour Page well. This achievement would not have been possible with the free version of the software.

22/01/2020

I started drafting a full report and critical analysis of the *Absence - Présence* creative process. This text will be helpful for the Major review paper; I will focus on this last composition to start the state-of-the-art argumentation of my research.

12/02/2020

This evening, *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento* will be performed at Bournemouth University, within the BU Sonic Arts Concert festival. It is an honour to be screened at my university; unfortunately, I am in Italy for my teaching commitment and cannot attend.

17/02/2020

I revised the latest version of *Absence - Présence*, and I can say that it is presentable; it has reached its final stage. I am sure I will find something to modify or refine in the future, but it does not affect it being screened. Is it perfectionist syndrome or a lack of self-confidence and letting something go?

20/04/2020

I am working on the Major Review. The paper draft has been completed and presented in a supervisory meeting today.

01/06/2020

The Major Review has been submitted. It is time to turn the page and start thinking of another composition. I already have a few ideas, which I will present to the supervisory team in our next meeting.

Studio II – della Natura della Trasformazione

08/06/2020

The very first ideas about the new piece:

- Experimenting with the cinematic 2.39:1 aspect ratio using the anamorphic lens I purchased for my new iPhone 12 Pro Max.
- Use audiovisual material with a solid referentiality to the real world.
- Natural elements as the primary sources of my footage.
- Environmental sounds as a primary compositional source (Soundscape), both unprocessed and processed to the highest degree of surrogacy.
- Following my supervisors' advice, I will work within a tightly defined time structure, using the Fibonacci sequence (Golden Ratio) to control the general form and duration of the events (visual and musical).

28/06/2020

I shot the first footage. From the bedroom balcony, I filmed the pine trees at the back of my house, using an iPhone on a tripod and an anamorphic lens attached to the phone through a cage. I struggled with exposure and white and colour balance, but the footage is excellent and usable.

09/07/2020

My Major Review was not successful. I was asked to resubmit it in two months with the amendments suggested by the panel. However, they did not consider it appropriate to call a second-panel discussion. I will work on it and suspend the practice work for a while.

28/08/2020

I filmed some intriguing footage while on holiday in Cornwall. There are two shots: a countryside landscape at nightfall and a windy, cloudy sky on the beach. The quality is not excellent, but I will extract every single drop of juice from them, exploiting *DaVinci Resolve Studio's* powerful de-noise features.

06/09/2020

Beautiful shots at sunset while walking on Avon Beach.

10/09/2020

Major review passed. It is time to go back to composing. However, a couple of days ago, in our latest supervisory meeting, I was asked to write a detailed plan about my Portfolio, a sort of Portfolio project. I will do it promptly. I reckon it is an excellent idea to write a concise but precise project with all the topics I will address in my compositional process. It will be helpful as an introduction to the Portfolio in my final thesis.

28/09/2020

I started collecting a lot of high-quality (96KHz 24bit) soundscape recordings, drawing from *Freesound*, *Soundly* (free version), and *Soundsnap*. I am going to record my environmental sounds soon.

18/10/2020

Yesterday, I went to Kimmeridge Bay for a soundscape walk. I recorded many beautiful and valuable tracks. I imported them into *Pro Tools* and started editing, choosing, and de-noising with *iZotope RX*.

20/10/2020

Considering the type of sounds I am collecting, I decided on a provisional title for the piece, *Stillness*. Everything is about calmness. The sounds are primarily textural soundscapes, and the footage is slow-paced, almost still. I am already working on an audiovisual draft, working the two media together. I can say that I got used to composing my pieces and working on sound and visuals simultaneously (almost). I have the two pieces of software running concurrently. After organising some starting materials separately in *Pro Tools* and *DaVinci Resolve*, I switched platforms back and forth. I render provisional videos or soundtracks and work on them in the other software environment, making changes and additions while the audiovisual relationship almost develops independently.

10/11/2020

The work is getting on well. I am using *Sound Particles* to process and transform several sounds heavily; it is an excellent piece of software. I am also working on a few sections simultaneously that feature different audiovisual materials. A Fibonacci sequence conducts the durations, and I follow the scheme derived from it for each movement section. I will assemble the whole piece with the movements in the proper order later. I would say that working under this strict rule makes the process easier and more controllable, for me at least. The observation of the interaction between sound and visual at an intermedial level is giving me ideas and material to reflect on. With this textural and slow-paced material (both sound and moving image), I often have to intervene to change the balance between the two media; sometimes, I experience a bit of boredom and push one of the two elements towards a more gestural behaviour.

28/11/2020

After our latest supervisory meeting and the team's positive feedback on my work in progress, I will follow their suggestion and compose a prelude to the piece. In this prelude, I can introduce the audiovisual material and give the audience a hint about what the piece conveys and its artistic concept. I will send my supervisors a draft of the *Stillness* prelude soon.

11/12/2020

Valuable feedback on the piece intro. Both supervisors suggested I change the title of the composition. Their reading of the piece and the distinct perspective they gave me on it is correct. The work is more about transformation than stillness. Therefore, I will change the title, artistic concept, and audiovisual behaviour in the final version to better reflect the nature of transformation.

21/02/2021

The piece is finished. I will have a supervisory meeting soon to get feedback and possible suggestions. The final title is *Studio II - della Natura della Trasformazione* (on the Nature of Transformation). The piece is 8 minutes and

55 seconds long and includes a prelude, five movements, three transitions, and an extended coda as a conclusion.

06/03/2021

We had two supervisory meetings on the final version of the piece. The audiovision of *Studio II - della Natura della Trasformazione* sparked a thorough analysis of the work, followed by an in-depth discussion. I received constructive feedback and suggestions for some refinements.

15/03/2021

Absence - Présence was awarded first prize at the London Independent Film Festival (LIFF) in the Music Video category. This was completely unexpected, considering it is a film festival, not a conference or festival about electroacoustic music and audiovisual composition. I am incredibly pleased about that. This means that my work, that piece at least, universally communicates something and is appreciated by a larger community of viewers.

Studio III - Space and Colour

29/03/2021

I am thinking about a way to investigate the audiovisual relationship in an environment where I can perceive the link between sounds with specific spectral qualities and their placement in the visual space. Perhaps I would need to produce a multichannel music soundtrack, but I do not have the means. However, as a first audiovisual concept, I thought of the triptych paintings from the Middle Ages and Renaissance. I drew this sketch (Fig. 9). I am considering using two different aspect ratios mixed: the cinematic 2.39:1, filmed with my anamorphic lens, and the 16:9. When composited in the same shot, the result will be an unusual symmetric framing with two side panels shorter than the central one.

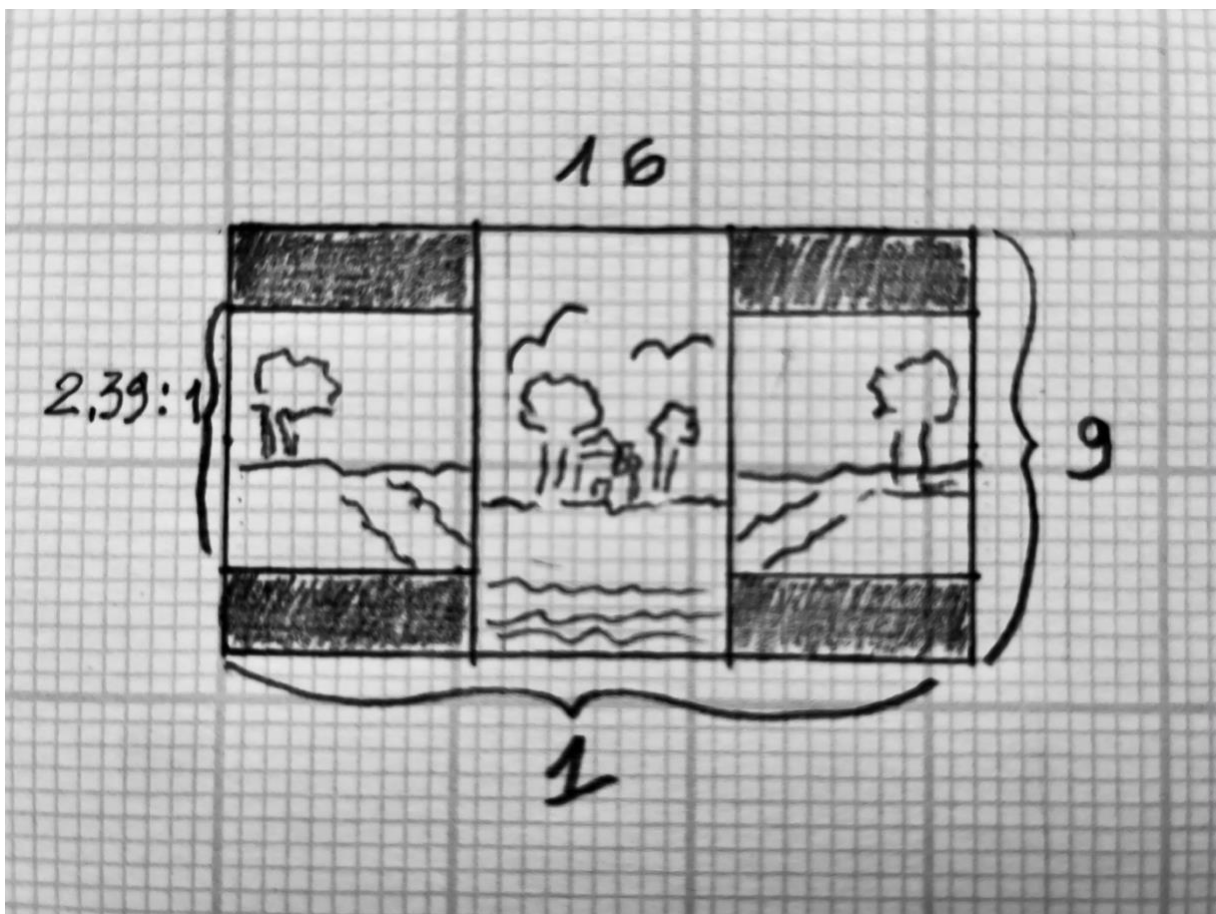


Fig. 9: Sketch of the frame proportions. Two aspect ratios joined, a 2.39:1 with a 16:9

14/04/2021

I started thinking about my new project a couple of weeks ago and came up with a few ideas. Yesterday, I had a meeting with my supervisors, and we talked extensively about the concept of the piece they got from the notes I sent them. It is about creating audiovisual relationships in an intermedial compositional context where the involved media share non-time-based characteristics. The relevant features I am talking about are space and colour. Space displacement can be considered in both sound (from mono to wide stereo) and visual positioning (split screen). Colour is regarded in terms of saturation and concerns sound (distortion, filtering) and visuals (from B/W to saturated blurred images).

25/05/2021

I created the first *Pro Tools* session. I started laying down some sounds I already had in my library. They are mainly soundscapes. The piece will rely on two types of sounds: natural sounds (soundscapes) as a textural material and instrumental and percussive sounds. I also recorded many sounds from a small Tibetan bell and seashells rolled in a salad bowl.

30/05/2021

Today, I recorded acoustic guitar and violin sounds. I am not a guitar or violin player, but I enjoyed playing around and experimenting with strange and unusual ways to produce sound on both instruments and using the bow on the guitar, too. It was like playing a game alone and experimenting with the "primal gesture" mentioned by Smalley (1997, p.112).

14/06/2021

I purchased the *dearVR Monitor* plugin (it was on offer) and am trying it as a substitute for a proper multichannel speaker setup. However, I have doubts about this technical solution. Maybe it is me that I am not perfectly confident with all the technicalities involved if I want to mix the piece down to a simple stereo version.

24/06/2021

After struggling with the rendition of proper spatial sound placement related to the visual and my artistic concept, I decided to implement the Binaural technique to mix the music, as I cannot afford a multichannel mixing environment. I modified the *Pro Tools* session and inserted the *dearVR* Plugin by Dear Reality. Perhaps the free version of the plugin is not enough; however, I will experiment with it for a while.

19/07/2021

The composition is getting on well. I have a draft of around 7 minutes and 30 seconds. I started working in binaural and produced a few passages where sound and visual interact effectively. The most exciting shots are those where I split the screen into three sections. Through wise use of *dearVR*, filtering, reverberation, wide stereo effects, and volumes, the two media interfere constructively, creating a solid bond and making me focus on the different visual panels and their linked sounds. I perceive a wider displacement on the sides and a strong attraction point in the frame's centre. However, some passages are boring; maybe some are too long. I will need to counterbalance the piece with some "action".

16/08/2021

Now that I am back from holiday, I am working on further sound processing in *Ableton Live* with *M4L* granular devices and native effects.

13/09/2021

I am working intensely on the finalisation of the piece. The draft lasts now around 8 minutes and 20 seconds. I sent this draft to an audiovisual composer friend for expert feedback. He suggests being more courageous with cuts, as he notices stagnation and loss of interest in a few passages that are too long. He feels the need for novelty and not that the piece insists on some material whose function is already exhausted. It is all about balance, but maybe on the structural level more than the micro level.

18/09/2021

I cut several bits in the first half of the work but added new footage (Old Harry Rocks) and sounds in the second half. I am also repurposing modified or similar material already presented at the beginning (part of the cuts) to create consistency and flow in the structural form. With the cuts and the addition, the piece is now 8 minutes and 15 seconds long. However, I need more material for the finale. I am running short on usable footage.

21/09/2021

My friend sent me a few shots of his, similar in content to mine. They are mainly beautiful flowers and trees. I am free to use them because they are experiments that he shot to test a new camera. I will work on them for the coda of my composition.

27/09/2021

I am working on the final version. The video is now 10 minutes and 20 seconds long, and I am adding newly selected footage. I am also composing the music for the finale.

29/09/2021

I purchased *dearVR Pro*; it was on offer at a considerable discount. I will use it for the final mix.

07/10/2021

The piece is finished. I sent it to my audiovisual composer friend for a final word.

16/10/2021

My friend's feedback is positive. He liked how I sorted out the heaviness and loss of interest he pointed out in the piece's first half. He gave me some suggestions on resolving a few visual details, like the excess of vignetting in the sky shots.

21/10/2021

I sent my supervisors the final version of the piece. They gave me their feedback in yesterday's meeting. We also talked about the next steps. Before approaching my final Portfolio composition, they suggested reviewing my whole Portfolio not with the eyes of the composer but as a viewer in order to focus better on the aim of my research project.

25/11/2021

Another meeting with my supervisory team. I must focus on reading, reflecting, writing notes, and finally planning my new piece.

02/12/2021

Studio II - della Natura della Trasformazione is in the official selection of the Munich New Wave Short Film Festival.

10/12/2021

I finalised the binaural mix employing *dearVR Pro*. It was a nightmare, as the pro version does not share the same parameter automation as the *dearVR Micro*. I left some audio tracks featuring minor spatial behaviour untouched while keeping the micro version of the plugin on them. I remixed the main passages from scratch, inserting the pro version into those audio tracks.

21/12/2021

I want to mention something related to a personal perceptual experience I have always had watching the piece's beginning. After the flower close-up fills the whole visual space, a tiny insect is visible crawling on the right-hand side of the wooden fence. I cannot help but think of that little insect and its life: where is it going, and to do what? This happens every single time I watch the work.

03/02/2022

I will interrupt my studies from March 1st to September 5th. During these months, I will continue studying and planning the new and final composition.

An Angel as a Flame of Fire

04/07/2022

It has been a long time since I did not write down a few notes in my logbook, my "Journal de Recherche". However, I never stopped thinking about a new piece or reading a few significant texts. The concept I have been cultivating since the beginning of this year was about a complex project which should have involved many different media besides sound/music with video as the "carrier". The other "fixed" idea concerns the remediation of some filmic material by one of my most preferred directors, Andrej Tarkovskij. It is a challenging poetic idea; I will put together shots of a calligrapher artist related to poetry, footage of live artistic performance (painting) poetically linked to the composition and Tarkovskij's recurring imagery, remediated footage from Andrej Tarkovskij's films, shots of some family photographs, and poetic verses recordings related to Tarkovskij's movies. How will all these diverse media interfere? How can I manage and control the equilibrium of the material at a formal and compositional level in order to create something meaningful and not an audiovisual "jumble"?

21/07/2022

Today, I put the iPhone on the tripod with the Zeiss 135mm as an additional lens. I started filming myself, turning pages through a book about Cinema history. Significant pictures of art film history are sorted in this book by year. I lingered on a few pages/years, particularly meaningful for Tarkovskij's life, cinema history, and my life. In my mind, this imagery is related to a *Mirror* (1975) scene where the character flips the pages of an art book about Leonardo Da Vinci.

25/07/2022

I am off to Italy for three weeks. I am taking the iPhone, the cage, and the additional anamorphic lens; I will find a tripod there. I am planning to film some shots related to Tarkovskij's imagery.

15/08/2022

Tomorrow, I will fly back home to Bournemouth. During the past couple of weeks, I filmed some footage:

- A beautiful twilight close to Rome airport. It was almost dark, but the sky was still slightly bright, with colours from orange to deep blue and a crescent moon.
- The Miramare Castle interiors by Maccarese Beach, where my brother lives during summer, and I was a guest for a few days. It is a recent building (from the 1950s) pretending to be a medieval castle on the sea. I filmed curtains gently flapping with the wind, two big mirrors facing each other, a medieval-style fake fresco, and a few further details.
- A sunset behind reeds on the Sabaudia Beach of dunes.

All these shots share some visual hallmarks of Tarkovskij's poetic imagery.

20/08/2022

In the last couple of days, I filmed The Arne Woods silver birches to link to *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) silver birches and pictures from my family history to relate to the *Mirror* (1975) family pictures (the main character's mother with his wife).

31/08/2022

I downloaded the full text of the dialogues of *Mirror* (1975) and *The Sacrifice* (1986). They will be a precious source of inspiration for the poetic text I want to use.

12/09/2022

In the last few weeks, I mainly worked on musical material. I will employ a few soundscape tracks as a textural background. Moreover, I want to record instrumental and vocal sounds. I am thinking of my brother's electric guitar, my sister-in-law's voice (both singing and speaking), and my niece's small percussive interventions. I also plan to draw inspiration from some of Tarkovskij's music soundtracks, using chords or melodic lines to rearrange as

a harmonic/melodic base to develop my material. This work is going to be a family business, indeed.

22/09/2022

I have finalised and sent my brother the harmonic and melodic material for the piece. There is a melody to be sung by the female voice (Fig. 12). The single notes of the theme, recorded separately, will be subsequently edited and stacked together, forming chords. The other material is a sequence of guitar chords and fully formed guitar parts to be performed (Fig. 10 and 11). The chords and the melody are inspired by the last track of *Andrej Rublëv's* music score by Vyacheslav Ovchinnikov (1966). I recorded a MIDI track as a guide and transcribed everything on a music sheet.



Fig. 10: First guitar part and chords



Fig. 11: Second guitar part (draft notation extracted from a MIDI track)

An Angel as a Flame of Fire

1

This is the melody on its own. After singing it as it is, you can perform every note singularly and sustain it as long as possible. I will then assemble them in layers, creating timbral chords.

Antonino Chiamonte

1 $\text{♩} = 48$

Voice

9

17

25

30

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Fig. 12: Vocal part

14/10/2022

In the last few days, I filmed several passages from *Mirror* (1975), *Andrej Rublëv* (1966), and *Ivan's Childhood* (1962); I have left behind only *The Sacrifice* (1986). I decided to shoot the computer screen while playing the films on it. This will give me a distinctive visual style because I get the pixelation and moiré effect. With further image processing, the remediation process, the technique, and the artistic intention behind this choice will be evident. I already have plenty of footage. I really do not know how I will sort all that out; the piece should last no more than ten minutes.

15/10/2022

With my son's help, I recorded the sounds of rustling paper and a scribbling pencil.

20/10/2022

I selected all the film shots from Tarkovskij's movies. In addition to the simple selection, I started editing together a few passages and also applied some video processing. There is still a lot of footage.

26/10/2022

The choice of my new composition's title seems tricky as it is its making process. I have to undertake a deepening process of the poetic intuitions underpinning this work, starting from the assumption that there are many quotations from Tarkovskij's films' dialogues, imagery, music, and biography. Four natural elements are present in his movies and my work: fire, earth, water, and air. The first three elements will be visually present, whereas the air will be present mainly as sound (but also visually with the fluttering curtains). The title could be *An Angel as a Flame* or *An Angel as a Flame of Fire*, with a more explicit reference to the Biblical text cited in *Mirror* (1975) and Tarkovskij's gravestone inscription chosen by her wife in 1986: "To the Man who saw the Angel." The Biblical reference is the appearance of the Angel to the prophet Moses as a "burning bush" or an "Angel as a flame coming from a bush".

03/11/2022

I found a website that allows the user to determine the name of almost any existing typeface. I extracted a few seconds of the main titles of *Mirror* (1975) and put the video clip in a timeline. Afterwards, I uploaded a JPG from that clip to the website. I discovered the name of a similar, if not identical, font, downloaded it to my computer and imported it into *DaVinci Resolve Studio*. With a colour picker, I established the exact original hue of Tarkovskij's titles and assigned it to mine (Fig. 13).

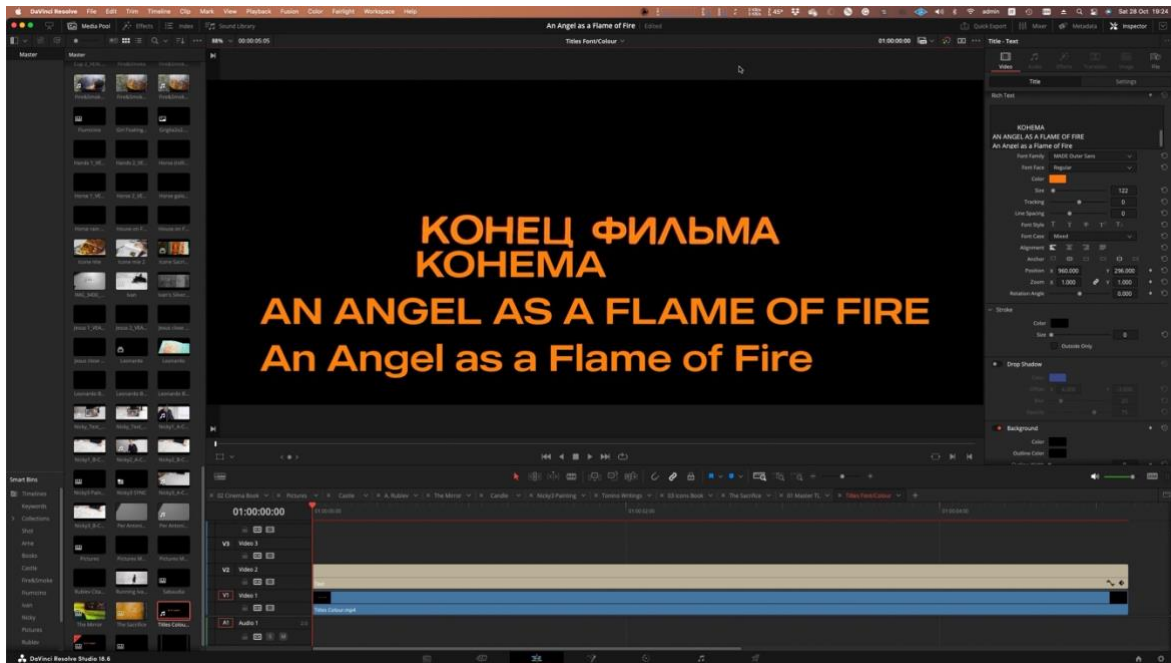


Fig. 13: Typeface and colour-matching process

09/11/2022

I asked a friend of mine whether he could record a few lines of text for me. He is a poet and an excellent reader, with a deep and warm voice; it will be perfect for my male voice.

25/11/2022

Today, I filmed a friend painter while painting three beautiful watercolours with black ink. The subjects are woods and seascapes. I used two cameras (iPhone 12 Pro Max and iPhone 8), one fixed on a small tripod on the working table, the other handheld on a gimbal.

27/11/2022

I am 60 today, and I am in Italy with my family. It is a gorgeous day. I filmed a large bin with burning weeds from the garden: mesmerising and hypnotic shots.

01/12/2022

Flying back to London from Rome, I had what I can call an "audiovision", a daydreaming experience with sound. I experienced the beginning of the piece. Sparse and small cracking fire sounds in the dark; then a resolute sonic

gesture like the sonic close-up of a hundred matches setting fire with the appearance of a big fire (the footage shot in Italy in November while burning weeds in the garden), then a crossfade or superimposition with the house on fire and the praying hands with flames from *Mirror* (1975).

11/12/2022

Recording session at my brother's studio in Italy. We recorded all the voice parts, the guitar score, and a few sounds from a tongue drum and lyre. I have a lot of material that is mainly tonal. I do not know yet how I am going to use it. It sounds lovely, but I feel it is pretty out of context with my mental idea of the piece, which is more abstract. Perhaps I will need to process it heavily and extract some interesting spectral features to make it usable.

20/12/2022

Today, I had the fourth meeting with my new supervisory team. Since September, when I returned to formal studies, it has been very productive. They helped me to sort out critical issues of my PhD project. I will interrupt my studies again for nine months from the end of this year. However, I will not stop working. I want to finish the PhD by next December.

28/12/2022

I wrote to a friend of mine, a composer, visual/graphic artist, and member of Hermes Intermedia. I asked him if he was available for small participation in my piece. I would like him to film himself while writing, with his beautiful calligraphy, a sentence extracted from the *Mirror* (1975) dialogues. He answered me in a few hours and agreed to help with my project.

29/12/2022

I watched the documentary *Andrej Tarkovskij, A Cinema Prayer* (2019) by Tarkovskij's son, Andrej A. Tarkovskij. It was mind-blowing. So much food for thought. It was an insight into his cinema concept, arts, and life, which are deeply spiritual. Learning about his struggles in *Mirror*-making and his final decision to let the film flow like a river of unrelated images, inner memories, and his childhood references was fascinating. He completely changed the script and the montage several times. The final film was not what he

conceived at first. I am considering taking the same approach with *An Angel as a Flame of Fire*.

12/01/2023

After watching the short movie *A Short Story* (2022) by the young Chinese Director Bi Gan and the audiovisual composition *Abstractions* (2010) by Thierry Gauthier, I decided on some things about my work. Firstly, I will try to use the reverse video technique somewhere. However, not a short sequence, but some seconds where, in the beginning, it is not clear that the video is playing backwards; the perceptual effect is disorienting and compelling. Secondly, formally speaking, it will be composed of several moments or movements no longer than three minutes each.

18/02/2023

I must find a way to start composing and sensibly organising material on a timeline (both music and video). I have plenty of material, suggestions, and ideas, but nothing concrete. This is not very pleasant. I have been terribly busy lately and stopped writing because of a lack of consistent time; I must start with the literature review and am pretty scared. I have been around as a spinning top for my family and my job. I cannot wait until next week when I have four full days for myself.

12/03/2023

I am still unsure which delivery format I should use for the *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* soundtrack. I want to experiment with Ambisonics, but I am pretty worried about the enormous amount of time I would need to set it up and mix, not to mention the hassle of downmixing the soundtrack to a more usable format in usual contexts such as festivals, conferences, and even the copy for the thesis submission and social media channels (Vimeo, YouTube).

17/04/2023

Today, I filmed myself flipping through the pages of another book. This time, it is a beautiful book on Russian icons. Together with the previous shots of a Cinema history book, they establish another strong bond and analogy with

Tarkovskij's book about Leonardo Da Vinci, present in *Mirror* (1975), and the icons book in *The Sacrifice* (1986).

11/05/2023

I finished writing the first draft of my exegesis. This is a great relief; at least I have the whole structure laid down with all the chapters and paragraphs in place. Now, I can focus on composing the last piece.

19/05/2023

I need a structure for *An Angel as a Flame of Fire*. I mean a real one, not just a concept about it, a compositional design that concretely combines the ideas I have had in my mind for a long time. I keep going through the timelines I set up on *DaVinci Resolve*, revising the editing and the colour grading, and thinking about transparencies, split screen, and slow motion, but actually, it is all inconsistent. Moreover, I have not been working on sound for a long while. I am struggling; it is the least I can say. All these months spent on writing took me away from composing. I knew something like that could have happened. I need to find the strength and mental attitude to reverse this situation.

06/06/2023

I started composing what might be the beginning of the piece, the prelude or prologue that I might entitle *The Burning Bush*. It is visual only and follows the idea I had at the beginning of December, which I reported earlier in these notes. Big slow-motion fire flames in a garden bin followed by a superimposed layer with shots from Tarkovskij's *Mirror* (1975): the "precious failure" (the boy) and the house on fire. I will soon draft the music, always following the audiovisual experience I had that day flying back to London from Rome.

07/06/2023

I spent almost the entire day refining the visual details of the opening sequence. It was a challenging and painstaking process. Apparently, I cannot proceed further if I do not achieve what my visual imagination wants. I am not talking of something perfect, but the right mix of colours, transparency, and visual concept must be there; otherwise, I cannot work on the music.

This is something to consider as part of my intermedial creative approach. Today, I wanted to start the music work. Instead, I spent all my energies on the visual again.

23/06/2023

I began composing the music for the prologue, holding tight in my mind all the ideas and, first of all, the feelings I cultivated during these last months. I honestly do not care too much about the piece's general formal structure, which has not been done yet. I decided to begin, and despite what is still missing, I cannot help but feel an almost physical urge to do so. It is the right moment, and the music finally calls for me.

30/06/2023

I decided to mix the soundtrack in 5.1 for screening; I cannot do this work without the support of a minimum of sound spatialisation; this is a creative and artistic need. I set up the *Pro Tools* session with *dearVR Pro* on each channel and *dearVR Monitor* on the master to work in a virtual 5.1 environment. I will work and mix with headphones because I do not have a 5.1 home studio. I will try to check my mix at the University before finalising it; then, I will produce a binaural rendering for people who cannot listen to it in a 5.1 studio.

05/07/2023

The initial couple of minutes are complete. It is a draft but should be close to the final version. If I change something, it will be because of what will follow and the balance between the different movements of the final composition. However, I like how it works. I introduced several of the musical material I will use during the piece.

07/06/2023

It is an intimate journey to discover the perceptual connections between my memories and Tarkovskij's memories that resonate through his visual imagery. I want my composition to flow freely like a river and create a stream of consciousness that recalls Tarkovskij's and my memories analogously and metaphorically.

11/07/2023

I started writing all the visual analogies and similarities between my shots and those of Tarkovskij's films in my notebook. This will help me devise the formal structure of the piece. I already know that *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* will be organised in independent movements or episodes; therefore, I am in the process of composing a second movement, which is the one including the Arne silver birches woods, the silver birches from *Ivan's Childhood* (1962), and the woods shot of *Mirror* (1975) finale. Visually speaking, this part is already almost ready from the rough cut. This happens before having a clear formal structure and where this movement will be in the composition. However, I am sure it is the right way to proceed, regardless of whether the general framework is already set.

14/07/2023

The notes about the visual analogies and similarities, considered as shared common features of media, and a possible ordered list of movements are complete (Fig. 14 and 15), as well as the video edit of the movement regarding the silver birches. Its title is *The Woods*, which will most likely be the first movement due to its duration (ca. 03:33).

SHOTS' VISUAL ANALOGIES & SIMILARITIES	
MY SHOTS	TARKOVSKIJ'S
GARDEN BIN ON FIRE	THE MIRROR'S "OUR PRECIOUS FAILURE" MIRROR & THE SACRIFICE - THE HOUSE ON FIRE
ARNE SILVER BIRCHES	IVAN'S CHILDHOOD - SILVER BIRCHES MIRROR - FINALE
BOOKS - ICONS & CINEMA HISTORY	BOOKS - ICONS & THE GIRL FROM THE SACRIFICE L. DA VINCI FROM MIRROR
SABAUDIA BEACH AND FIUMICINO AT DUSK	IVAN'S CHILDHOOD - FINALE THE SACRIFICE - FINALE

Fig. 14: Visual analogies and similarities between visual materials

POSSIBLE ORGANISATION OF VISUAL MATERIAL IN MOVEMENTS	
PROLOGUE	- BIN ON FIRE
1 st MOVEMENT	- SILVER BIRCHES & WOODS
2 nd MOVEMENT	- BOOKS
3 rd MOVEMENT	- BEACHES & CHILDREN

Fig. 15: Possible organisation of movements

19/07/2023

I have a first draft of another movement, including *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) and *The Sacrifice* (1986) finales, with my shots of Sabaudia Beach and Fiumicino at dusk. I am in the process of assembling other movements. The notes were revealed to be extremely helpful. I now have clearly under my eyes groups of visual material that will form individual parts of the final work. I also realised that many shots I filmed during the long production process will be discarded eventually.

15/08/2023

I finished the music for the first movement, *The Woods*. It has been challenging work, and I am unsure whether it is what I wanted to achieve. There have been many tough decisions to make. The visual is textural, slow, and non-narrative, although it is representational, depicting the Arne woods, *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) silver birches, and the *Mirror* (1975) finale. I devised textural music full of metaphorical sound references and interspersed with melodic and harmonic material. I had another source of inspiration for composing the first movement's music of *An Angel as a Flame of Fire*: Francis Dhomont's (1996) acousmatic work *Forêt Profonde*. The visual and the music progress in consonance, having similar behaviours. The lack of audiovisual counterpoint and opposition could make the audiovision meditative (hopefully not dull). The intermedial interference is evident, but I do not know if it produces an engaging audiovisual experience.

Furthermore, there is probably a decision to make regarding the stern contrast between my B&W footage and Tarkovskij's. My shots are detailed and have a "modern" look. Tarkovskij's shots have a hugely different and contrasting visual quality instead. Maybe it will be worth degrading my footage with some video effects to make it more low-quality and look old-style to match the others better.

21/08/2023

About the remediation of Tarkovskij's films and the integration of different visual sources into the final artefact. I did not simply extract passages from Tarkovskij's films directly from the video files. Instead, I employed a

technique I had already experimented with thirty-five years ago with creative photography but dynamically this time. I filmed the computer monitor while playing back the films. In this way, I had the opportunity to literally explore the shots, changing their perspective and aspect ratio, focusing on details, creating camera movements where there were not, and producing unpredictable moiré effects, slightly tilting and panning the camera. Afterwards, while merging my original footage with Tarkovskij's excerpts and composing the final audiovisual work, I focused on searching and highlighting similarities, analogies, assonances, and audio and video conceptual resonances.

01/09/2023

A noteworthy food for thought is the working approach or compositional method I devised and applied during my Portfolio production. I immediately realised it was impossible to compose the visuals and the music simultaneously. I had to start somewhere first. After setting the general artistic ideas of a piece, I felt more natural beginning with shooting and composing the visual part draft. Afterwards, I worked on sound and music composition. However, this never meant that the visual was set as granted and fixed, immovable. Instead, there was always a slow process of mutual influence undergoing. The music was initially tailored to the visual draft, which was changed by the music, and so on, in a spiralling proceeding. This back-and-forth process lasted until I was content with the balance achieved.

06/09/2023

A funny anecdote to report. While revising the edit of the guitar solo on the caption of the transition shot leading to the third movement, a seagull flying out of my window squawked. This sound was in synchrony with a guitar pause and suited perfectly to the audiovisual and poetic mood of the forthcoming movement, anticipating it. I decided to use that sound, placing it in that exact spot. This sensory experience shaped the compositional approach to the third movement. It helped me create this section's underlying sound design track set in a marine environment.

11/09/2023

I am about to finish composing the third movement of *An Angel as a Flame of Fire*. At this point, the piece is ten minutes and twenty seconds long. Besides the prologue, the initial project would have encompassed at least six movements and probably an epilogue. Considering my forthcoming working schedule and the time I used to compose the piece so far, it would take me another six months to complete the original project. I determined that ten minutes are enough to articulate a sensible discourse on my most complex and challenging composition, allowing me to reflect and discuss the main topics of my research: audiovisual intermedial composition, audiovisual relationship, and intermedial interference. The final duration of my Portfolio will be about 47 minutes. This will fulfil my agreement with my supervisory team to present a Portfolio of composition lasting at least 40 minutes. I compare *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* to a poetry book comprising independent, self-contained short poems belonging to the same project and stemming from the same poetic background. In this way, the audience will not experience the audiovision as incomplete but as reading a few haikus out of a collection. I consider *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* one of the landmark compositions of my life. It will be a work worth mentioning as representative of my artistic production in the future, among a few other compositions. I do not want to rush it because I must include it entirely in my Portfolio of compositions. On the other hand, I cannot afford to delay my PhD submission because I would need at least six months more work to complete the initial project.

16/09/2023

An Angel as a Flame of Fire is again challenging the non-narrative/narrativity of music concepts at the foundation of my works. Even more than in *Absence - Présence*, film excerpts from Tarkovskij's movies and original representational footage carry solid referentiality to reality and actual actions, eliciting rich narrative worlds in the audioviewer. This effect might be even more substantial in people who know Tarkovskij's film production. Once again, I have to stress that there is no structured storytelling at the foundation of my works and that I intend a narrative audiovisual work as something based on a script. The audiovisual material is designed as a means

for poetic expression; the audio and visual objects are used as compositional material. On the other hand, evoking narrative strands is evident due to the audiovisual interaction, which also produces narrative strands in me. I reckon this is a positive and enriching outcome of my work, confirming its relation to Eco's (1962) open-work concept and free individual interpretation.

21/09/2023

The first three movements of *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* show a diversity of compositional approaches concerning the audiovisual relationship. In the first movement, a mixture of abstract/ambiguous soundscapes and referential sound objects create a strong narrativity effect through synchresis, but still with a high level of abstraction/surrogacy. In the second movement, I used an abstract approach using the split screen technique for the video and spectral and spatial processing techniques for the sound objects that show third-order surrogacy features (Smalley 1997, p.112). The visual subject is undoubtedly representational (books), whereas the sound objects are from paper sounds and flipping pages sounds; however, the compositional approach deploys an explicit gestural behaviour in the classical style of acousmatic music. I would say that the first movement's music and sound show metadiegetic features (Gorbman 1987, p.22), the second movement's nondiegetic features, and the third diegetic features, at least for what concerns the soundscape layers. These diverse audiovisual relationships create three quite different perceptual experiences. This is the first time in my exegesis that I explicitly mention diegesis, referring to the music and its relationship with the moving image.

26/09/2023

The composition is finished; I reckon it is well-balanced in its current form. It is a self-contained and independent piece. It is part of a broader project that will encompass at least three other movements, where I will use significant footage I have shot that I could not use in the prologue and first three movements. That material will allow me to investigate further what kind of intermedial interference will arise from the interaction of the filming of a calligrapher and a painter's performances and shots of family photographs with other excerpts of Tarkovskij's films. Once again, the interaction balance

between different medial forms of expression will be explored more deeply. It is time to go back to writing and conclude my exegesis.

25/12/2023

By chance, reading Natasha Barrett's post on *Facebook*, I discovered the *APL VIRTUOSO* plug-in (developed at the University of Huddersfield). It is a binaural renderer accepting many different audio formats as input. I tried the AAX plug-in version and rendered a new binaural version of *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* 5.1 mix. The result is impressive; the spatial and timbral features of the original mix are much more detailed, precise, and close to the original. I will use it for the final version.

Appendix 2

Technical and analytical notes, scores, and tables

In this section, I collected, in chronological order, technically detailed notes and reflections on some of the compositions. They are “technical” because they explain specific compositional choices about form, material, melodic sequences, harmonic fields, poetic concepts underpinning my artistic decisions, pre- or post-compositional audiovisual analyses, etc. I did not undertake this work for every piece; moreover, this section resembles a production journal, which is not the intended writing style for the exegesis. However, it is worth including them for future reference rather than lose their memory. They can help give the reader a deeper understanding of the creation process of the compositions they refer to, and they are an integral part of my autoethnographic methodological approach.

A visual analysis of Harry Smith’s abstract animation *No.7: Color Study*

A detailed visual analysis of the Harry Smith animation’s contents has been carried out in order to track and map the visual behaviour and its changes over time. All the main visual features have been considered, such as the different shapes and movements on the screen, the different colours, and how they change over time in relationship with the various forms and the visual energy variations.

One of the most prominent elements of the animation is what I call the “expanding star”. It seems one of the most significant elements that brings coherence to the film. It is also the primary cause of almost every meaningful change regarding visual dynamics, shape transformation, colour alteration, and transition between sections. What I call “concentric expanding circles” are also essential elements in the film. Their behaviour often causes a rapid increase in visual energy. The animation is in five parts, which I define as movements using a musical term. Each movement is separated from the subsequent one by a visual pause. The visual pauses are almost equal in duration. Sub-sections have been identified in some movements.

This detailed pre-compositional stage visual analysis (Table 7) has been fundamental to knowing this silent abstract film’s visual material and behaviour perfectly, therefore, to devise and organise meaningful intermedial relationships at the compositional stage. This analysis has been carried out before inserting the main titles into the final video; around six seconds

must be added to the timecode displayed in the left-hand side column of this table if the reader wants to follow the timing on screen.

Timecode h:min:sec:fr	Events	Comments
00:59:49:00	SMPTE Universal leader.	
00:59:58:00	2 start cue.	
01:00:00:00	Start.	Black background for 10 frames.
01:00:00:10	Squares and circles.	Squares and circles appear on an expanding red spot in the background. In less than thirty seconds all the material concerning the first movement is presented.
01:00:02:04	Diagonal band.	The expanding band extends from top left to the bottom right corner.
01:00:04:06	Diagonal band.	The expanding band extends from top right to the bottom left corner.
01:00:08:06	Red spot.	Red expanding spot in the background.
01:00:15:03	Black hole.	A black hole with a red crown.
01:00:19:16	Concentric expanding circles (psychedelic effect).	They transform from red to purple.
01:00:28:20	Start of a crescendo.	Through the wide concentric expanding circles, a developing process starts, bringing to rise dynamics.
01:00:38:16	Mix of shapes.	Material accumulation with a mix of squares, circles, and concentric circles. Rhythm and energy increase.
01:00:45:24	Concentric expanding circles (psychedelic effect).	Fast change in colour. Orange - red - purple.
01:00:53:21	Relaxation.	Sudden decrease of energy.

01:00:58:02	Coda of the first movement.	Energy suddenly increases again, and all the first movement's shapes are swiftly showed in a fast edited sequence. Red concentric expanding circles close the first part.
01:01:03:20	Black n.1	First visual pause. 1 sec 11 frames.
01:01:05:06	Second movement, section A.	The second part starts with a relaxed rhythm. Four dark blue spots, three pink ones. They have different sizes and irradiate from the centre of the frame. In 8 sec the main material that characterises this movement is presented.
01:01:13:20	Green spots.	Green spots appear.
01:01:19:00	Red spots.	In less than twenty seconds three different moments with the same material in different colours.
01:01:24:13	Energy rises.	Set of spots grouped in a circle and some other different shapes.
01:01:30:19	Expanding stars.	Expanding stars appear for the first time together with circles and diagonal and vertical bands. The stars lead to a climax.
01:01:32:09	Energy peak.	The screen is full of colours and different overlapping shapes.
01:01:37:05	Energy drops.	Energy suddenly drops, expanding stars and circles perform the concluding gestures of this section.
01:01:40:08	Black n.2	Second visual pause. 1 sec 8 frames.
01:01:41:16	Second movement, section B.	With this section starts a process of development of the material of the second movement: circles, groups of circles and stars. The colours are the same presented at the beginning of the second part.
01:01:44:16	Steady red spot.	Big red spot on the left side of the frame, followed by other spots and stars.
01:02:00:11	Two red spots.	Two expanding red spots turning into one on the right side of the frame.

01:02:03:12	Expanding stars.	Expanding stars trigger a change of the colour of the primary spot, turning it into green and pink. They also solicit a rapid increase in energy.
01:02:07:08	Red background.	Diffused big red spot in the background.
01:02:08:06	Black hole.	A black hole with a red crown is shown. The crown turns its colour into yellow. In the hole, a circle of spots starts to spin.
01:02:10:01	Concentric expanding circles (psychedelic effect).	Small concentric expanding circles are surrounded by a ring of spots.
01:02:11:24	Black hole.	A black hole with a red crown turning into yellow/green. Shapes are primarily concentric. Expanding stars and concentric circles bring to show the very basic material that characterises the second movement. Few spots withdraw from the foreground towards the centre disappearing.
01:02:15:04	Black hole.	Again, the black hole with red crown turning into yellow/green. Three expanding stars within the hole bring the second movement to an end.
01:02:17:04	Black n.3	Third visual pause. 1 sec 12 frames.
01:02:18:16	Third movement section A. Squares, grids, and stripes.	New material presented. Square of squares, stripes, and grids. New material is presented within five seconds. The level of energy and the visual rhythm is quite high during all this movement.
01:02:24:12	Expanding stars.	The expanding stars give coherence to the animation, recalling some shapes already shown in the film. They act as a “fil rouge” all along the animation.
01:02:25:15	Diagonal band.	Expanding diagonal red band from top right corner to bottom left. It turns into a black square at the centre of the frame.

01:02:27:18	Diagonal band.	Something similar to the previous event occurs, but more in the background. This is also due to a lighter and pale colour. Expanding diagonal pink band from top left corner to bottom right. It turns into a black square in the centre of the frame.
01:02:32:18	Stripes in a circle.	On the left side of the frame, a group of vertical stripes appear in a circular shape. A yellow circle appears for few frames; then it shows up again in green.
01:02:37:20	Crescendo.	Few expanding stars act as a trigger for the visual crescendo.
01:02:46:13	Big red/orange spot.	A swift and significant red/orange spot (3 frames long) commits the entire scene, giving the start to a decrease in the visual energy.
01:02:52:10	Third movement section B. Radiating beams.	New shapes show in the form of radiating beams and rays. This is the beginning of a subsection of the third movement, where a process of development between old shapes and new ones starts.
01:02:57:12	Spots, rays, squares, and stars.	From now on all the materials are shown. Spots show again together with squares, stripes, grids, stars, radiating beams and rays.
01:03:10:04	Expanding stars.	Once again, the expanding stars give rise to a new process of accumulation. After few seconds the vertical and horizontal stripes act as the main character. Energy is quite high, but the rhythm is relaxed.
01:03:27:11	Sun explosion.	After this event, the scene changes drastically. Radiating beams and rays become the main characters.
01:03:29:01	Second explosion.	This second explosion is a multiple explosion and carried out by three spots of different colours. After

		this event, the energy falls, and the third part is going to end.
01:03:30:11	Expanding star on the right of the frame.	This expanding star gives the sign for the last gestures of the third part.
01:03:33:15	Black n.4	Fourth visual pause. 1 sec 20 frames.
01:03:35:10	Fourth movement.	During the fourth movement a process of derivation, elaboration, and development of the first movement's material is deployed (circles).
01:03:36:24	Circles and clock.	A new shape, similar to a fast-rotating clock, is introduced. It could be considered as a variation of the spot.
01:03:40:09	Beams and stripes.	Beams and stripes are added to circles, beginning of an accumulation process. Few and small spots appear in the background.
01:03:45:03	Squares and circles.	Squares and circles show up. Moreover, some overlapping diagonal bands appear, forming two crosses.
01:03:53:11	Green rhomboid.	A green rhomboid appears for the first time fading out from the centre of the frame.
01:03:54:18	Pink rhomboid.	A second and trembling rhomboid shows up, always fading out from the centre of the frame.
01:04:01:15	Concentric expanding circles (psychedelic effect).	Two fast moving concentric expanding circles are shown, they suddenly rise the visual energy. It is a short and fast increasing that brings the fourth part to an end.
01:04:04:09	Cross, squares, and circles.	A cross in the centre of the frame, followed by squares, circles and circles of coloured spots are the last gestures of the fourth movement.
01:04:08:04	Black n.5	Fifth visual pause. 1 sec 10 frames.
01:04:09:14	Fifth movement.	In the fifth movement, new material appears, such as acute triangles and rhomboids.

01:04:13:18	Rhomboids.	Rhomboids are not entirely new because they have been anticipated for few seconds during the fourth movement, but here they are more prominent and developed.
01:04:16:08	Four expanding stars.	Four expanding stars introduce a new shape, the acute triangle.
01:04:19:18	Acute triangle.	An acute triangle sails anti-clockwise all over the frame like a ship for 8 sec and 12 frames. It grows up along the way and reduces its size during the last second of its presence.
01:04:28:05	Expanding star.	The sailing triangle disappears hitting the centre of the frame like a dart and transforming itself into an expanding star.
01:04:29:09	Spots and rhomboids.	A circle of anti-clockwise spinning spots shows up in the centre of a black hole.
01:04:32:20	Accumulation process.	Energy rises by means of an accumulation process of different shapes. A rotating circle of spots, horizontal and vertical grids, radiating beams, and expanding concentric circles are shown.
01:04:41:14	Concentric expanding circles (psychedelic effect).	Two expanding concentric circles become the main acting characters for almost five seconds. Visual energy is high but rhythm quite slow.
01:04:46:11	Black hole in a square.	Energy suddenly drops after the expanding concentric circles.
01:04:50:15	Acute triangle.	The acute triangle appears again. This time it acts as a clock hand in the centre of the frame.
01:05:00:11	Expanding star.	An expanding star in a red circle triggers the next scene.
01:05:02:22	Acute triangles dancing around.	A circle of acute triangles perform a ring-around dance. They rotate anti-clockwise.

01:05:08:17	Spots dancing around.	A circle of spots performs a ring-around dance. They rotate anti-clockwise.
01:05:15:12	Energy rises.	During this last climax, almost every shapes acting in the film is shown in a few seconds. Only grids and stripes are missed.
01:05:19:00	Coda.	Energy drops and almost steady spots are the predominant shapes of this short moment. The spots are characteristic of the second movement. This passage (4 sec 14 frames) has to be intended as a static pre-finale, where stillness creates a tension and subsequently an expectation.
01:05:23:14	Expanding stars.	The expanding stars are again triggering the last significant visual gestures of the film. They lead the animation toward the end.
01:05:26:14	Final eight gestures.	The final three seconds are clearly organised as a rhythmic musical gesture in 3/4.
01:05:29:21	Fade out.	13 frames fade out.
01:05:30:10	End.	

Table 7: Detailed visual analysis of *No. 7 Color Study*

Studio I - della Natura del Movimento

One practice starting idea for this first audiovisual composition study conducted in complete autonomy, without using preconceived visual material like in *No.7: Color Study*, was employing high-quality video material freely available on the Internet to the general public as raw footage. I decided to focus on the technical aspects of montage and video processing. The reason for this choice derives from the necessity of learning and developing technical skills in the field of the visual arts. Therefore, for this first step, I decided not to consider all the technical issues concerning the filming process.

Following the suggestion of my dear friend and colleague Valerio Murat (personal communication, 16 March 2018), I turned my attention to the high-quality 4K video footage library that Mitch Martinez (2015), an American director of photography, made available for free on his website. The downloadable video material is all camera-sourced without any video

synthesis or graphics generation processes involved. This material suits my idea of using concrete footage, which is comparable to the approach I will use for the audio material, where recorded instrumental or organic sounds will be involved in the compositional process, implementing electroacoustic music techniques belonging to the musique concrète style.

After thoroughly investigating the enormous library, I decided to orient my choice towards simple and easily recognisable footage, such as burning flames, snowflakes, water, smoke, coloured fluids, black bed linen waving in the wind, etc. All the chosen materials, from the most abstract (tiny dust particles or bokeh) to the most recognisable (fire and water), share a common feature associated with movement.

The following step was to determine the nature of the sounds to employ in the music composition. I decided to turn my attention to sonic materials derived from the recording of an acoustic guitar and a female voice. I started recording the sound of a guitar using the microphone like a magnifier, approaching specific zones of the instrument I wanted to focus on. I also used high levels of gain during the recording session. I played the guitar, performing on it non-conventional, and sometimes even bizarre, gestures like hitting the strings between the nut and headstock with a little spoon or scratching the strings with a metal object, letting it bounce soon after. I will use some recordings already part of my audio library for the female voice: the sounds of a French actress reading a Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī's poetry and a traditional Southern Italian singer. I chose those specific voices because of the peculiarity of the sound of the French language and the typical musical expressivity of that kind of traditional singing. Furthermore, I recorded my voice performing a few vocal effects in the guitar's sound hole, exploiting the amplification, resonances, and colouring of the guitar's body in such a way.

Afterwards, I started experimenting with editing techniques in *Adobe Premiere*. I decided to use and start learning the *Adobe Creative Suite* because it provides the user with a complete software bundle which spans from the editing and processing of still images (*Photoshop*) to video editing (*Premiere*) and even to colour correction, colour grading, and visual effects animation (*After Effects*). The great convenience of the *Adobe Suite* resides in the fact that different working projects created into a specific software are linkable to one another, leaving them running in the background, giving the user great flexibility and a unique and fluid workflow.

I assembled about a 1-minute montage, concentrating my attention on the visual work exclusively, without considering any relationship to the moving image I was creating with sound or music. This momentary choice is justified by the need to acquire editing techniques, basic knowledge, and practice. I started using footage of slowly evolving and moving coloured fluids and a burning flame cut together, using a style I would define as “textural” due to the slow editing pace, where the various video clips are left running for quite a long time. From the very beginning, I have already started experimenting with the split screen technique, considering the different parts of the frame, both horizontally and vertically placed, as they were part of a musical score or building blocks of an architectural form. I have alternated some swiftly edited moments with water images to the textural and static sections, waving fabric, and then fire blades, massively deforming the shots’ original proportions.

For this first study, I have decided to experiment with the metric montage method theorised by Eisenstein (1949, p.72), where “the fundamental criterion for this construction is the absolute lengths of the pieces.” Then, the different video clips were joined following precise proportional ratios similar to those regulating the musical measures. However, I have sometimes considered the specific features of the visual content of the shots regarding proportions, shapes, colours, and visual impact, adapting it with the “slip” tool to the predetermined duration of the clip. The “slip” tool allows the user to slide the visual content of a shot within an edited clip without modifying its in and out points and duration and applying in this way a personal interpretation of Eisenstein’s (1949, p.73) rhythmic montage method.

After this short video editing practice exercise, I returned to work on the recording session to listen carefully to the recorded material and start the first passage of selection and elaboration of the sounds. I am aware that in composing an intermedial audiovisual work, it is necessary to follow and implement an integrated approach. The composition of the music and the visuals have to follow a common shared and parallel path, conversing, influencing, and enriching each other along the way to create an overall and coherent potential meaning.

In the audiovisual relationship, what would be functional in one of the two media regarding adequate expressiveness would not always work similarly in the other or the combination of the two. An example could be when the video is a fast sequence of extremely short clips in the order of a few frames. In a silent video, such a sequence might be helpful to increase the

visual rhythm and create tension and directionality, as in music when gestures and rhythm are predominant in a musical passage. However, what happens when musically organised sounds are bound to a rapid video sequence? Is it functional for the work's artistic and communicative purposes to follow the swift visual editing with the sound in perfect synchrony?

Visual perception, regarding temporal resolution, thus for details comprehension, is deficient compared to the sonic one when it comes to a temporal shortening of the stimuli, and the performance rate of the events increases (Welch and Warren, cited by Takeshima and Gyoba 2013). Furthermore, Takeshima and Gyoba (2013, p.1) state that:

“Auditory sensation tends to be more temporally dominant than visual sensation when each sensory signal occurs simultaneously. Thus, temporal auditory information compensates for the poor temporal resolution of vision.”

Therefore, by experience, tight synchrony is only sometimes helpful, but on the contrary, it might be adequate to allow the music to conduct the discourse. This lets the audience grasp the most relevant visual details better and more efficiently, leaving some of them in the background, as they are not completely meaningful or somewhat secondary, whether considered in the general context of a scene or sequence. In any case, the swift video editing would equally build up the desired tension effect, primarily for the contrapuntal nature of the relationship with the music.

Studio I - The Six Movements

- 1) Incipit (00:00 – 00:16)
- 2) Intro (Presentation of most of the audiovisual materials) (00:17 – 2:09)
- 3) The Ocean [Bridge] (2:09 – 2:41)
- 4) Heart on fire (2:41 – 3:12)
- 5) Fluidity again [bridge and end of the first movement] (3:12 – 3:31)
- 6) Interlude: it is snowing on my Heart (3:31 – 4:36)

Absence - Présence - Artistic Concept, Poetics, and Audiovisual Material

Absence - Présence is a non-narrative audiovisual composition in which my life experience about love relationships inspires its artistic and poetic concepts. Another source of inspiration was Plato’s “Symposium”. My personal and poetic interpretation of the eulogy that Socrates gives in Plato’s “Symposium” on the nature of Eros (Love) considers Love to be “absence” (lack of something), something we miss deeply. Love is longing for something we miss deeply. We love what we miss or what we do not possess yet. When we attain something, passion subsides; then, it starts over again in a perpetual cycle, wishing for something else, essentially the same “object of desire”. Love in my work is intended in its broadest meaning, but I chose to render it in a sensual fashion.

Two main concepts, “grief” and “memories”, lay at the foundation of my work. Those two words are represented by the French terms that form the title: *Absence* for the grief caused by separation and *Présence* for fond and lively memories.

Furthermore, *Absence* and *Présence* are related to other terms that strengthen the piece’s conceptual framework and are heard uttered in the composition with a variable degree of manipulation. *Absence* is associated with Time, Distance, and Annihilation; *Présence* to Love, Existence, and Life. *Absence* and *Présence* are also linked to different colours, shapes, objects, sounds, and natural elements that determine the whole palette of material used in the piece (Table 8).

Absence			Présence		
Time	Distance	Annihilation	Love	Existence	Life
Blue colour		Shadows	White and skin tone colours.	Blurred human being (a woman).	
Singing voice (a siren) and water sounds.			Murmuring and giggling voice (Love), breaths and wind sounds, uttering words.		

Table 8: Correspondences between words, concepts, colours, and sounds

All these interconnected concepts, sounds, and visual imagery make a consistent foundation for this work, contributing to deploying an associative mapping strategy and creating an intermedial audiovisual composition. Those elements explicitly pertaining to the different media involved in the work are all part of a broader conceptual framework referring to

intermedial writing practices. They are all “composed” together, hence intertwined so profoundly that each represents a fundamental and indispensable “brick” in building the piece and its potential meaning. I intend composition as writing and writing as the creative act of impressing a meaningful discourse on a medium.

As stated above, my approach to audiovisual composition is non-narrative and somewhat abstract. Therefore, neither the trajectory of the musical discourse nor the visual one is determined by any narrative. There is no narrative-driven reason why we hear a specific musical gesture or see a particular sequence of images. No predetermined storytelling shapes the trajectory of the work. However, I use organic and life-like filming or camera-sourced material, i.e., “concrète visual material” (Hyde 2012, p.172).

The rules governing the relationship between audio and visual material (including the two predominant colours) are based on the poetic concepts underlying the piece and are briefly exposed above. That is to say that there is a vast and diverse range of underwater and ocean sounds, breaths, and wind sounds (including instrumental and bird sounds), and a chanting voice that sings the orchestrating melody: the distinctive musical mark of the piece. The voice is harmonised in a polyphonic style; the choir results from an editing process and sings notes drawn from the first six pitches of the theme, which have subsequently been combined with diverse techniques to obtain melodic variations, as it was a tone-row sequence (Fig. 16).



Fig. 16: In the first four bars, the six pitches of the original sequence

A woman’s voice is also heard giggling, uttering words, and murmuring. The visual material is even more limited in quantity and variety than the musical material. Shots of a white curtain with its distinctive feature of concentric circles characterise the moving image, with a blue bedsheet often organised in wavy or “hilly” shapes displaying concentric rings, too. Concentric circles are, therefore, one of the dominant geometric shapes of the video and create coherence, putting the two predominant colours of the film in relationship to each other.

Moreover, there are details of a pillowcase with its blue and white dots, zig-zag lines, and close details of a female body, head, eyes, and face. A significant feature of all the shots is that they are somewhat out of focus. The blur effect was added in post-production if the original take was not shot out of focus. The out-of-focus effect symbolises memories, as does the flickering effect often added to many shots during post-production.

Structure and Form

Absence - Présence is an audiovisual composition in four movements, an interlude, and a finale. From a formal point of view, each movement is subdivided into subsections, marked by different transitions and three climaxes. The three peaks deploy the same kind of audiovisual material and gestural behaviour. However, the primary climax is situated precisely in the middle of the piece, creating a symmetrical structural form. The energetic tensions in the first half of the work head towards that middle point and then release their energy moving forward to the end.

The first movement (A) is divided into three subsections and shows an asymmetrical structure. All the primary audiovisual materials are presented during A1 (00:00:00 - 00:51:05) and A2 (00:51:05 - 01:48:12). In A1, the discourse is mainly gestural. A first small climax marks the transition between A1 and A2. Gestural behaviours in music give the audience a feeling of forward motion and linearity, imparting a clear perception of the progression of time in the film. This musical feature creates a sense of “narrativity” rather than “narrative”. Musical gestures push forward the perception of time and build expectations in the audience, eliciting an evolving abstract sense of narrativity without specifically illustrating the unfolding of a narrative plot.

It is interesting to observe how, in a non-narrative audiovisual composition such as *Absence - Présence*, those gestural musical moments, more than their synchronous visual counterparts, are primarily responsible for developing subjective narratives. Furthermore, extending Kalinak’s argument and transferring it from narrative cinema and film music to abstract audiovisual compositions, when visual imagery is vague, ambiguous and does not carry meaning itself, “music shapes our very perception”, “anchoring the image to specificity” (Kalinak 2010, p.4 and 18). Music can do this, deploying “its exceptional ability to create and resonate emotion between the screen and the spectator” (ibid., p.25).

After the climax, in A2, the character of the work changes, becoming more texturally oriented. In that way, a considerable portion of the sound spectrum is disengaged, and the perceived sense of time is dilated, leaving room for introducing the first half-phrase of the theme. The interlude breaks the first movement at the end of A2, splitting what would have been a short and natural development of this movement's audiovisual material into a sort of delayed coda. The first movement has an asymmetrical tripartite structure. The interlude is meant to disturb and break the balance and harmony of the piece. Through a compositional process called "accumulation" and a video loop, the function of the interlude is to surprise the audience with sound objects never heard before and that will never be represented again in the piece. The visual behaviour is also specific to this section and is no longer displayed in the composition.

A visual pause, characterised by seven seconds of solid white frames, marks the passage between the first movement and the second. With *visual pause*, I intend a specific period where the visual has a consistent behaviour, displaying a motionless and solid-coloured background, deprived by every articulated shape or variety of colours. For my definition, I draw inspiration from Hyde (2012), who first proposed the definition of "visual silence". I favour using a musical term as a reference, relating the word "pause" (absence of musically organised sounds) to the time domain representation. In contrast, "silence" (absence of sound spectra) pertains to the frequency domain representation.

The onset of the second movement (B) is anticipated during the visual pause with the introduction of a choral section, which lasts approximately thirty seconds. From the beginning of this section, gestures disappear, and the music starts displaying textural behaviour. The listener's attention is shifted towards the internal details of the sound objects. The mood and atmosphere move towards a broader and unworldly environment. This is what I refer to as the *Sirens' Chant*.

At this point, another critical reflection arises from my practice and casts light on my compositional method. Music is constituted and articulated by time but in a specific and unobvious way. Music is "organized sound" (Varèse and Wen-Chung 1966, p.18) over time, an investigation of time, but it is not a linear and naturalistic representation of time. In music, the perceived sense of time can be dilated or compressed, depending on whether a rhythmic pulse or a gestural behaviour is present and how it is possibly organised. In this way, and at

the same time, music can provide the visual experience either with a sense of time continuity or a more unrestricted temporal representation.

The second movement ends when suddenly another gestural section begins. This is the central climax of the piece; it marks the beginning of the third movement and occurs precisely in the middle of the composition. The audience is swiftly brought back to an earthly dimension and pushed forward. Time perception is again predominant, and expectation about what is next is elicited. The audiovisual material is more or less the same as in the previous minor climax. Through a well-established musical process of repetition and development, a balance is achieved between predictability, recognisability, and novelty; however, gestural behaviour and the peak in visual energy last for only a few seconds. The piece's structure gradually moves back to be "texture-carried" (Smalley 1997, p.114) and remains more or less the same until the end.

C2 is marked by the short occurrence of one of the most potent images of the composition; with a transparency effect, a woman's eye is superimposed on a blue concentric circle, accompanied by a vocal two-note dissonant chord. This is meant to anticipate something developed later in the piece. The musical structure is still texture-carried, and the visual is an elaborated and developed re-proposition of material already seen. C3 begins with what I would refer to as a "mini climax"; the audiovisual content is a shorter repetition of the central climax, but the sounds are strongly filtered and distant. It is like a remembrance of the climax. An even shorter appearance of the eye is inserted in the "mini climax", accompanied this time by a three-note dissonant chord.

The fourth movement's onset is characterised by repeating a varied and developed visual imagery already seen in A2. The background musical structure is always textural, but we have the insurgence of another brief polyphonic chant. The first half of the fourth movement (D1) introduces D2, which is the development of the woman's eye image; the main musical feature is the presence of the second half phrase of the theme.

A four-second visual pause marks the passage to the finale of *Absence - Présence*, where a clear and not blurred close-up of a woman's face is seen for the first time in this audiovisual composition. The structure of the music is still textural, but the nature of the sounds heard is different. A windy soundscape and a murmuring voice accompany the final gestures of the film, slowly fading out under the main titles.

Synchrony

In *Absence - Présence*, I used my two methods of devising the synchronic relationship between visual gestures and musical sounds. I realised I had been intuitively developing this dual approach since the beginning of my audiovisual practice, as seen in early collaborative works (Chiaramonte and Cirulli 2011).

The first approach involves intentionally designed moments of audiovisual synchrony to highlight specific gestures. These events, which I call *Primary Synchronisation Points*, are integral to the piece's overall structure. They can be visually or musically driven, depending on whether the visuals or music lead the creative process.

The second approach involves discovering chance moments of audiovisual synchrony during editing and subtly adapting the music to align with visual gestures. I refer to these as *Secondary Synchronisation Points*. They are unplanned synchronous moments revealed through close audiovisual analysis of passages. While the visuals remain untouched, micro edits to the music allow a tighter synchronisation.

These two synchronisation approaches, intentional design and chance discovery, are an essential part of the core of my audiovisual composition method.

Timbre and Image

As stated before, one of the leading visual features of the film is defocusing or blurring. This characteristic is related to memory and distance in space and time. To produce my own visual material, I undertook intensive research on a social media platform called "Pinterest", where billions of images are stored and shared among users. I collected hundreds of pictures by many diverse photographers, all characterised by the same visual style: blurring. This research and media collection helped me develop my visual creativity and devise my visual processing style. I analysed many still images of human subjects produced with different techniques, from evanescent black and white pictures to very colourful ones. Two photographers, Sven Pfrommer and Bill Armstrong, mainly attracted my attention and inspired me with their saturated, blurred images. I managed to reproduce a similar effect on my footage.

Regarding the creation process of the musical sounds, I mainly used the granulation technique for producing the majority of *Absence - Présence* sounds. It has been a distinctive feature of

my electroacoustic music production for the past fifteen years. Granulation is a powerful and flexible audio sample processing technique that allows the user to control many parameters with very high qualitative results. I have used it for many processes, from simple time stretching and compression to complex pitch shifting and random spatialisation techniques. The sound result has a distinctive sonic coherence and nature. Conceptually, the granulation sonic features are strictly bound to my aesthetics and poetic approach to music creation. The “granular” and “cloudy” nature of my sounds are linked to the concepts of memories, perception of psychological time, inner/outer space investigation and so forth, which are underlying my electroacoustic music creations so far and are yet at the foundation of *Absence - Présence*.

My audiovisual practice has an intermedial approach; it puts in place a creative technique that aims to control all the source materials, regardless of their origin, to integrate them into a unified creative process seamlessly. However, in designing this process and after having devised the poetic, aesthetic, and fundamental relationships between concepts and audiovisual material, I needed to decide which of the two media involved should be produced first, the starting point. I opted to begin with the visual as I am less acquainted with the film language and techniques. After the filming stage, I started editing and created around three minutes of a video draft alone. At that point, I returned to the sound and began recording, collecting, and elaborating on the planned sounds. In working between media, I noticed something impressive. The switch between visuals and music was particularly challenging. Initially, it was not easy to put together even a few sounds. Finally, the music started flowing, and I produced the first three minutes of the piece on the video draft. In this process, I often returned to the editing stage as the music suggested a few changes in the video. However, this process was mutual, and when I returned to the music, some new changes in the soundtrack “suggested” by the latest video version occurred. It is crucial to notice that the changes were not substantial, often minimal. Still, mutual dialogue and influence were established between the two media in the compositional process. The same difficulty occurred when I had to go back and produce the second half of the video; once again, it took some time to establish where to begin in practice, although I had a clear idea about how to proceed for concluding the composition both for the video and the music.

Starting with *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento* and proceeding further with *Absence - Présence*, I put in place a method of combining and integrating sound and visual that draws inspiration from Garro's (2012) continuum of gestural audio vs. visual association strategies, which I called associative mapping.

Studio II - della Natura della Trasformazione

This study aims to establish an intermedial relationship between music and the moving image when the sound and the imagery have a very strong referentiality to the real world. Usually, the unprocessed footage is primarily synchronised with the same natural environment's processed sounds, whereas processed moving images are related to natural, unprocessed sounds. However, there is always a certain degree of ambiguity where non-processed sounds are heard with non-processed imagery and vice versa. The study was conducted using a strictly defined time structure that shaped the piece's form, using the Fibonacci sequence. The Fibonacci sequence provides the piece's trajectory that holds together the work and gives it rhythm by applying its numbers to the event's timing. The numerical sequence also provides formal coherence by shaping the composition's general form concerning sections (movements) and sub-sections. Fig. 17 shows a few details of the work's timings derived from the Fibonacci sequence.

#	Type to Filter	Marker Name	Track Name	Comments
17		Start	Markers	
23		Prelude - 39 sec. duration	Markers	
1		I Section - 1 min. duration	Markers	
10		Evo Mix start +34 sec. from I Section	Markers	
13		Evo Mix End - 21 sec. duration	Markers	
25		Transition 1 - 5 sec. duration	Markers	
26		II section - 1 min. 43 sec. duration	Markers	
27		III Section - 1 min. 12 sec. duration	Markers	
28		IV Section - 50 sec. duration	Markers	
3		Start Transform -34 sec. to Finale	Markers	
4		-21 sec. to Finale	Markers	
29		II Transition - 10 sec. duration	Markers	
5		V Section - 3 min. duration	Markers	Finale starts at 05:55 (Transformation)
6		+34 sec. from Finale	Markers	
22		34 sec. bridge	Markers	Max energy here
21		-89 sec. to end	Markers	
8		+8 from -89	Markers	
9		+13 from -89	Markers	
14		+21 from -89	Markers	
7		-55 sec. to end	Markers	
15		-34 sec. to end	Markers	
2		-21 sec. to end	Markers	
12		-13 sec. to end	Markers	
11		End	Markers	

Fig. 17: Markers on the Pro Tools timeline showing timing annotations

There are two different source materials: a maritime landscape and a countryside landscape with their respective environmental sounds. The natural relationship between sound and image is why we see a particular footage typology with their sounds, i.e. when we see the countryside landscape, we hear that soundscape. The same concept is applied to the marine landscape and its sounds. This association creates audiovisual consonance. However, we see several transition passages with a typology of landscape synchronised with the other sounds' typology; this contrast aims to create an audiovisual counterpoint. Audiovisual counterpoint and harmony aim to produce tensions and resolutions in developing the compositional discourse.

Furthermore, elaborating the original visual material using video processing, framing compositing, and transforming the original soundscapes through spectral processing play another essential role in creating contrast and audiovisual counterpoint. Sometimes, the visual transformations are sudden and quickly juxtaposed with the original imagery. Other times, these transformations occur over a long time, as in the final sequence. Different degrees of elaboration are applied to the materials during the piece, from very subtle ones to such an extent that the source is barely recognisable or completely unknown. Audiovisual materials' manipulation and processing share a common approach, producing different "source bonding" degrees. These diverse degrees of bonding create different "orders of surrogacy" (Smalley 1997, p.110), both for sound and image. Highly processed sounds are usually synchronised with the original footage, whereas the original natural sounds are synchronised with the processed moving image. This compositional choice aims to create a strong contrast between quasi-abstract moving images, realistic sounds, and the original landscape footage and abstract sounds.

Moreover, the compositional process further explored one of the two diverse approaches to synchronising a visual gesture and a musical sound. I am referring to the *SSP* (*Secondary Synchronisation Point*), a synchronic relationship that occurs casually during a shot, usually not on a cut. Exploiting this technique helps give rhythm to the composition, pushing forward the perception of time and attracting the audioviewer's attention.

Timeline of Events

01:00:00:00	Titles
01:00:16:00	Prelude (Countryside)
01:00:50:00	Titles
01:00:55:00	1 st Movement (Countryside)
01:01:55:00	1 st Transition (Clouds and seaside)
01:02:00:00	2 nd Movement (Seaside)
01:03:43:00	2 nd Transition (Trees)
01:03:55:00	3 rd Movement (Countryside)
01:04:55:00	4 th Movement (Seaside)
01:05:45:00	3 rd Transition (Clouds and seaside)
01:05:55:00	5 th Movement (Countryside)
01:08:55:00	End

Appendix 3

List of Selections, Awards, and Presentations

- 2024 - *An Angel as a Flame of Fire* was selected at the “Videoart.ist”, International Video Art Screening Program in May 2024, Izmir (TR).
- 2023 - *Studio II - Della Natura della Trasformazione* was selected at the “International Film & Script Festival Lotus” in June 2023, Athens (GR).
- 2021 - *Studio II - Della Natura della Trasformazione* was selected at the “Munich New Wave Short Film Festival” in December 2021, Munich (DE).
- *Absence - Présence* was awarded “Best Music Video” at the “London Independent Film Festival” in April 2021 London (UK).
- *Studio II - Della Natura della Trasformazione* was selected for screening at “BEAST FEaST 2021: Recalibration” in April 2021, University of Birmingham, Birmingham (UK).
- 2020 - *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento* was screened at the “BU Sonic Arts Concerts” in February 2020, Bournemouth University (UK).
- 2019 - *Studio I - della Natura del Movimento* was screened at “Le 9 Stanze - Viaggio a tempo negli spazi dell’Arte” in March 2019, Rome (Italy).
- 2018 - *No.7: Color Study* was accepted for screening at the “NYC Electroacoustic Music Festival 2018” in July 2018 at Abrons Arts Center, New York (USA).
- *No.7: Color Study* was accepted for screening at the “Seeing Sound 2018 Symposium” in March 2018 at the Bath Spa University (UK).
- 2017 - *No.7: Color Study* was accepted for screening at the “Sound / Image 2017 Colloquium” in November 2017 at the University of Greenwich (UK).

- 2016
- Invited Seminar and Masterclass about *Audio-visual Music and Sound Art* at Musrara (The Naggar Multidisciplinary School of Art and Society), Jerusalem (IL).
 - Invited Talk at Ars Electronica 2016 - Anton Bruckner University: *Audio-visual music and Sound Art, a collaborative and interdisciplinary practice-led research field for developing intermedia artworks.*

In the Mirror, Tarkovsky presents reality as a set of fragmented images and distorted memories of which we—as much as the director himself—must make sense.

Alexandra Smith (2004)

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Those who believe that it is necessary to do philosophy should do philosophy, and those who think that one should not do philosophy must do philosophy to demonstrate that one should not philosophise. Therefore, one must do philosophy in any case or depart from here, bidding farewell to life, since all other things seem to be mere talk and empty words.

Aristotle