

Ars Electronica Futurelab and phase7 in Bergen:

Murmuration – When Swarms Dance in Flight

(Linz / Bergen, May 23, 2013) A swarm of 35 quadcopters was the featured attraction yesterday at “Murmuration,” an open-air event that kicked off the Bergen (Norway) International Festival, the largest of its kind in Northern Europe. As if steered by an invisible hand, the quadcopters configured by Linz’s Ars Electronica Futurelab danced as an illuminated ensemble in midair and conveyed the audience into an extraordinary artistic sphere. This amazing show is being reprised today.

Murmuration by phase7

In fact, murmuration is a natural phenomenon in which birds such as starlings dart through the air in constantly morphing swarm-clouds. These seemingly haphazard and nevertheless goal-oriented formation flights protect the birds from predators. Their apparently unpredictable swerves form constantly shifting geometric patterns in what looks like total defiance of gravity. phase7, a German artists’ collective, derived inspiration from the rules organizing this elegant swarm behavior. They asked: What might happen if an individual suddenly ceased complying with them? The artists integrated the Ars Electronica Futurelab’s quadcopters—drone helicopters weighing less than 500 grams—into their orchestrated performance. Controlled via GPS, the miniature whirlybirds take to the sky and carry out a programmed, synchronized choreography to the accompaniment of alternately ascending and descending musical strains. All of these fictional and real swarm movements correlate with the digital sounds of a new composition by Christian Steinhäuser and Boris Blenn. These fantastic formations in the sky are also accompanied by dancers and musicians as well as a chorus of 300 children from Bergen. In this blend of music, high-tech and performance, phase7 creates a superb multimedia sculpture in the night sky, an acoustic, constantly transmuting work of airborne architecture that illuminates—on artistic and metaphysical levels—the contradictory and instinctive swarm behavior of modern individuals.

Bergen International Festival

This 61st celebration of music and theater in Bergen is being held under the patronage of King Harald V of Norway. The program running from May 22 to June 5 includes a world-class lineup of concerts, opera, dance & theater performances, exhibitions and debates. During the festival, numerous free events are also produced throughout the cityscape. There are approximately 130 performances. This year’s theme is “Diversion, Dialogue and Disturbances.”

phase7 performing.arts

Director and media artist Sven Sören Beyer founded the phase7 performing.arts collective in 1999. Beyer’s cross-media aesthetic, his fascination with technical innovation, and an interdisciplinary approach have characterized phase7’s productions right from the outset, and

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the Berlin media artists' network quickly made a name for itself worldwide. Its work consistently focuses on the nexus of human beings and technology, and on the interaction of reality and virtuality. Computer & software specialists and performing & visual artists have collaborated in developing a totally distinctive artistic vocabulary. The selective use of leading-edge technology such as motion sensing, robotics and wave field synthesis transports theater into the new millennium. This uncommon coupling of performing arts and state-of-the-art developments in media art has resonated worldwide. phase7's itinerary has included appearances at Dance Camera West in Los Angeles, the New Vision Arts Festival in Hong Kong and in Stavanger, Norway during its year as European Capital of Culture in 2008. Selected projects phase7 has produced since 1999: "city particles" (2004), a short film about dance that has been screened at international festivals including the American Dance Festival; the official opening ceremony of the German Chancellor's Office in 2001; "C-The Speed of Light," an opera during the Einstein commemorative year and Summer of Science 2005 in Berlin; the closing ceremony of Stavanger's Capital of Culture year featuring a chorus of 800 singers performing before an audience of 30,000; and "delusions," a cross-media performance staged at the Stuttgart State Opera's Forum Neues Musiktheater.

phase 7: <http://www.phase7.de/>

Ars Electronica Linz Futurelab: <http://www.aec.at/futurelab/de>

Ars Electronica Linz: <http://www.aec.at/news/>

Bergen International Festival: <http://www.fib.no/>

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