

Press kit



Exhibition

Brian Eno

Lightforms / Soundforms

14 June - 1 October 2017

Arts Santa Mònica

Max Cahner Cloister, Levels 1 and 2



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Brian Eno. Photo: Shamil Tanna

1. THE BASES OF THE EXHIBITION

Brian Eno

Lightforms / Soundforms

14 June - 1 October 2017

Max Cahner Cloister, Levels 1 and 2

Exhibition in the context of the Sònar+D Festival



- **The most comprehensive international exhibition to date on Brian Eno.**
- **Exhibition produced by Arts Santa Mònica, taking up all three floors of the building.**
- **Eno has created the new piece *New Space Music* for the occasion.**
- **Brian Eno is a musician, composer, visual artist and music producer** (Talking Heads, David Bowie, U2, Coldplay, among others).
- **The ambient music creator is presenting his latest album *Reflection* in the form of a musical installation at Barcelona-El Prat Airport.**

The exhibition, ***Brian Eno. Lightforms/Soundforms***, organised and produced by Arts Santa Mònica, with the collaboration of Sònar+D, presents a selection of Eno's recent works as an artist and as a musician, accompanied by a range of the notes, sketches and drawings he used to articulate his ideas and exhibit them. The aim of the exhibition is not to exhaustively go over his creative career, but rather to offer a detailed and comprehensive image of his current activities and short-term future plans. Apart from the celebrated audiovisual installation ***77 Million Paintings***, the proposal includes, among other pieces, the new installation ***New Space Music***, created by the

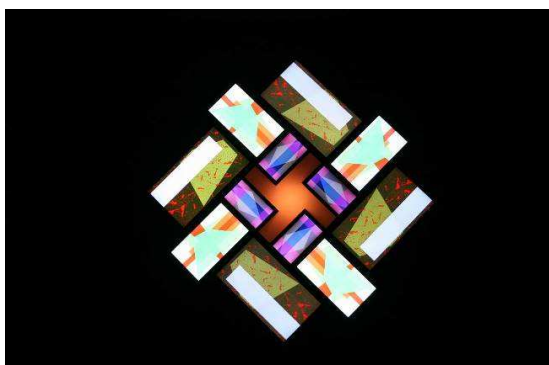
artist especially for the occasion, installed in the Max Cahner Cloister of Santa Mònica Arts, and the presentation of his latest album, **Reflection**, in the baggage claim area of Terminal 1, at Barcelona-El Prat Airport, throughout the month of June.



77 Million Paintings.

Photo: Nick Robertson at WORDSALAD.

Eno studied as a visual artist at university, and started his career as a musician and producer. He later became interested in transferring the conceptual tools and procedures surrounding music to his original domain. Moving quickly and continuously through art, music and writing, over the years he developed a unique methodology, based on the movement of painting, the slowing down of music and the playful and emancipatory relationship with technology. Eno puts this methodology to the test, working on it and carving it out, using three materials that are hard to compare: light, sound and words.



77 Million Paintings.

Photo: Nick Robertson at WORDSALAD.

BRIAN ENO – LIGHTFORMS / SOUNDFORMS

The lightforms and soundforms the title refers to are forms in motion. They are not harmonic architecture of the musical type, nor are they chromatic, lineal constructions of the pictorial type. They are figures that we see briefly, like a glance in the street. Forms that imagination and memory grasp much more firmly than the eyes or ears. The figures that are the lightforms and soundforms approach us from a diffuse background. They do not occupy their own space, in a defined sense - they are not fictional figures -, but rather they come from an undefined space, with unreachable outlines and proportions that cannot be fully understood, and they open the path for us, making themselves apparent for a few moments, to the same rooms and corridors that the visitor goes through.

Enigmatic figures that draw themselves into the half-light (and soon get lost again); we cannot know what they are saying, what they are doing, but we can think about what they are saying *to us*, what they are doing *to us* - and what we are doing to them -, in the space and time that they share with us. Maybe they can have no other meaning than that which corresponds to each individual scene shared, unexpected and present.

The shapes in motion lead the way, and perhaps make us feel inclined to follow them, to immerse ourselves - to get lost, as everything seems to indicate - in the space that they are coming from. But this space is too vast, too complex; or perhaps it is simply just a little absurd - it exceeds imagination and memory. Good musical and visual sense soon discard the space as a simple occurrence, as a mere experiment in the best of cases. To continue moving forward we need to lower our guard, leave the realm of good sense: go through these spaces with the same expectation and unconsciousness (with an element of distress) that we experience when going through a maze.

Lluís Nacenta, curator

2. CONTENTS OF THE EXHIBITION

Brian Eno. *Lightforms/Soundforms* is the most comprehensive international exhibition to date on **Brian Eno**. The exhibition, which takes up all three floors of Arts Santa Mònica, includes Eno's new piece made especially for the occasion: ***New Space Music***, a musical installation designed specifically to be listened to in the Max Cahner Cloister at Arts Santa Mònica.

BRIAN ENO – *NEW SPACE MUSIC*

Brian Eno has composed the piece ***New Space Music*** at Arts Santa Mònica specifically for the occasion. It is a new musical composition to be listened to in the special space of the Max Cahner Cloister. Eno says:

This musical piece is my last foray into a new kind of Ambient music.

The architect Asif Khan got in touch with me and asked me for a musical piece for the British Pavilion at the World Expo this year, which is taking place in Astana, Kazakhstan.

The compositional techniques used on this occasion are traditional and contemporary at the same time. On the one hand, I took decisions about the sounds, the mode and the melody, very much like how composers have done for centuries. But I also use different new kinds of software, which I have been developing for decades (recently in collaboration with Peter Chilvers).

Instead of specifying a set of rhythmic and harmonic relationships, like you would do in a conventional musical composition, these pieces are based on a series of algorithmic rules that govern the functioning of each of the composition's elements. For example, there might be several recurring phrases, of just a few notes each, but which are modified by algorithms that dictate 'only play 75% of the notes', for example, or 'play the note an octave higher 25% of the time', or 'extend the note for between 1 and 6 seconds 50% of the time'. With a piece like this, there can be twelve to twenty channels that undergo modifications like this, in such a way that the resulting composition changes every time it is played.

And so, in the purely generative version, the piece is different every time. What I've been rehearsing lately, however, is picking out specific fragments here and there that I've really liked, and 'freezing' the rules in these sections, turning them into fixed sections that repeat themselves each time. The recording you hear in this installation is everything that I 'froze'... so that, despite having been generated from multiple repetitions of the piece (hundreds, in fact), it has been frozen into a set piece. Well, that's not

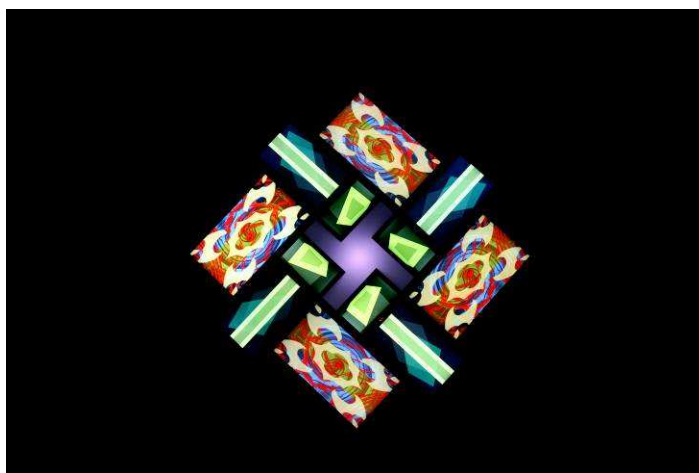
entirely true: there are still some atmospheric elements that float freely and reconfigure themselves each time the piece is repeated.

After a long time of being interested in the possible 'paintings' of recorded music (possibilities that I explore with Ambient music), I'm not getting increasingly interested in sculptural possibilities. This piece, like others that I have done recently, uses multiple channels. Music thus becomes three-dimensional, an event that takes place in space, as well as in time.

Brian Eno

BRIAN ENO - 77 MILLION PAINTINGS

The iconic work **77 Million Paintings** by Brian Eno will take up level 2 of the centre. It is a huge, generative audiovisual installation. This means that the sounds and images that comprise the work evolve indefinitely, according to a series of rules that have a certain statistical dimension (in such a way that the results cannot be fully predicted by the artist), and which, due to the huge number of possible combinations of shape, colour and sound, continually renews itself. In fact, each individual light and sound combination would take millions of years to repeat itself. According to Eno's calculations, the piece is able to produce around 77 million different images (hence the title of the piece).



77 Million Paintings.

Photo: Nick Robertson at WORDSALAD.

“By its very nature, **77 Million Paintings** is an abstract piece. Yes, there is a figurative element, but the context allows them to be interpreted as abstract. The ideas behind abstraction and realism are strongly correlated with aesthetics and the content of the painting, and with everything going on inside of the frame. A lot of the interest around 77 Million Paintings is also what happens behind the frame. This is how the piece behaves and works. You are aware that what you are seeing is changing, and it changes so gradually that you can relate with it as if it were a normal picture, but as

a spectator you are also aware that you will never see the same picture again. In this regard, although the viewer is looking at abstract compositions, they are just one part of the story, because many more things are happening at the same time.”

“I am constantly fascinated by the combinations of this piece, which is always creating surprises. I always say the same: “I haven’t seen this one yet”. One of the things that really appeals to me with generative art is that it is so enormous, in the sense that there are so many variations, that not even the artist can see all of the possibilities. From this perspective, *77 Million Paintings* is a never-ending piece, despite the fact that it is completely finished. It is an interesting and valid distinction for almost all generative art.

Brian Eno

This is a generative installation, with respect to both the images and the music. This means that Eno has not directly created each of the visual configurations, musical phrases and harmonies, but rather, on the basis of a collection of prefixed shapes and sounds, what he has created is a series of instructions that, implemented by a computer, determine their combination and succession over time.

The number of possible combinations is immense, and because the instructions that the computer follows have a certain degree of randomness, the artist cannot predict in detail how the piece will evolve in each case. According to Eno’s calculations, and as the name indicates, the number of iterations needed for a determined configuration to repeat itself is 77 million.

Lluís Nacenta, curator

“It creates things that go beyond my liking. This is what I like about it: my taste has a certain boundary to it, there is a certain edge to my taste, and this thing often works outside of that edge.”

Brian Eno

BRIAN ENO – *LIGHT BOXES*

Another prominent piece of the exhibition are the ***Light Boxes***, found on Level 1 of Arts Santa Mònica. They are light paintings that are constantly evolving. They can be considered paintings in motion, or visual music.

Light Boxes, by Brian Eno, is an installation formed of light pieces, each of which flows gently through the infinite combination of captivating colour scales, which are self-generating, using a range of inter-connected LEDs, with musical accompaniment. Extending the boundaries of time with a piece that seemingly has no start or finish, Eno ‘encourages people to stay in the same place for a while’.

"If a painting is hanging on a wall, we don't feel that we're missing something by not paying attention to it. Yet with music and video, we still have the expectation of some kind of drama. My music and videos do change, but they change slowly. And they change in such a way that it doesn't matter if you miss a bit."

Brian Eno

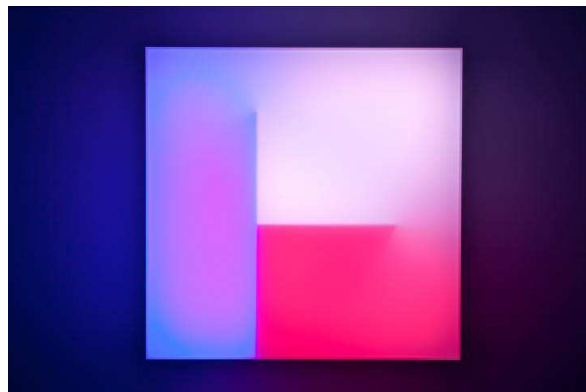


Photo: Paul Stolper Gallery

Light Boxes use LED technology to produce a slow progression between different formations of colour, which Eno calls 'colourscapes'.

This is one of the lines of work that he has kept alive for over 40 years, and it is partly born from his collaboration with Peter Schmidt. According to Christopher Scoates, both artists were experimenting in the late seventies on one of Schmidt's pictures, with a large red circle in the middle, surrounded by brightly coloured watermarks. They practised lighting it with a rudimentary system that gradually went from one primary colour to another.

Eno described the result as an "animated painting" in which "the effect was spellbinding: as the colours changed, the big circle in the centre would move slowly from intense hot red to deep black to violet, and the different details in the intricate surround would appear and disappear in turn. The whole canvas became alive and deeply three-dimensional". On this occasion, *Light Boxes* are presented with music, which Eno has created as a complement to *New Space Music*. The intention is for the music of the *Light Boxes* to be added to what is found on the first floor above the cloister, generating a new type of listening (a kind of musical commentary) with the piece, which the visitor has already been able to feel on the ground floor.

Lluís Nacenta, curator

“(…) I have been trying to slow music down so it becomes more like painting, and to animate paintings so they become more like music... with the hope that both activities would combine and converge in the middle.”

Brian Eno

This confluence of different means is essential in his work:

“Painting and music have always been interwoven for me. I started playing with light as a medium at about the same time I started playing with sound when a teenager. When I look back on what I’ve made over the intervening years it seems to me I’ve been trying to slow music down so it became more like painting, and to animate paintings so that they became more like music...in the hope that the two activities would meet and fuse in the middle.”

Brian Eno

BRIAN ENO – *NOTEBOOKS*

On the same floor we can also find a curated selection of the artist’s works on paper. It is an organised and dated series of notebooks that Brian Eno has kept since he was a teenager, collecting both personal and work-related accounts interchangeably. Through these writings, drawings and diagrams, documented in a polished yet discreet way, these pages allow the reader to follow the intimate itinerary, the initial efforts, the discarded variations and the development of his ideas and works, both musical and artistic, over the years.

The notebooks have never been published beyond partial fragments. Eno perceives them as a bank of ideas.

“I tell myself again and again that I’ll keep them for when the ideas run out. And I’m still waiting!”

Brian Eno

BRIAN ENO – *REFLECTION/INTERVENTION AT BARCELONA-EL PRAT AIRPORT*

Brian Eno. *Lightforms/Soundforms* also includes an intervention at Barcelona-El Prat Airport, in the baggage claim area of Terminal 1. Travellers who arrive into the city will hear the latest ambient music album by Brian Eno, ***Reflection*** (2017) through the airport speakers. This album is the full realisation of Eno's idea of ambient music (a concept that he conceived in the 70s), now that computers allow you to create music for indefinite periods, which is also constantly changing (which was impossible when music could only be recorded on vinyls, tape or CDs). The idea of presenting this new ambient piece at the airport is a reference to one of the first ambient music albums that Eno created: ***Music for Airports*** (1978).

Ambient music (a term coined by Brian Eno himself) is designed to be a constant musical presence in a determined space, occupying it not necessarily in the background, but on a plurality of possible planes, from the foreground, where we would listen to a conventional piece of music, to the very background, where we would ignore it completely. Ambient music needs to resist the fluctuations of our attention just like everything else. If we are not paying attention it needs to not be annoying, and if we are then it needs to be interesting. This makes it suitable for playing in the waiting spaces of an airport. Furthermore, bringing it to this space links *Reflection* to one of his most famous albums, *Music for Airports*, in 1978. Eno writes in the album notes: "*Reflection* is the most recent of my Ambient experiments and represents the most sophisticated of them so far. My original intention with Ambient music was to make endless music, music that would be there as long as you wanted it to be. I also wanted this music to unfold differently all the time - 'like sitting by a river': it's always the same river, but it's always changing. But recordings - whether vinyl, cassette or CD - are limited in length, and replay identically each time you listen to them. So in the past I was limited to the systems that create the music, recording thirty minutes or an hour and releasing that. *Reflection* in its album form - on vinyl or CD - is like this. But the app with which *Reflection* is produced is not restricted: it creates an endless and endlessly changing version of the piece of music."



Album cover of *Reflection* (2017). Brian Eno

3. SOME NOTES ON BRIAN ENO

Brian Eno is a British musician, composer, visual artist and music producer (he has produced artists such as Talking Heads, David Bowie, U2 and Coldplay, among others). He is known around the world as one of the leading innovators of generative painting and ambient music, a genre that he himself defined. Eno's work is almost exclusively dedicated to the possibilities offered by light as a medium, and his auditory and visual installations have been redefining emblematic architectural spaces of the world since the late 1970s. His work is exhibited regularly: from Tokyo to Cape Town, from Rio de Janeiro to New York and from London to Madrid.



Brian Eno. Photo: Shamil Tanna

4 ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE EXHIBITION

Arts Santa Mònica is organising activities related to the exhibition **Brian Eno *Lightforms/Soundforms***, some of which have already been confirmed (shown below). We will inform you of new activities shortly.

'Diffractional Interfaces' workshop

12-16.06.2017

Lecture Room at Arts Santa Mònica and Sónar+D

Master's in Art and Design Research (EINA) - Interface Cultures (Kunstuniversität Linz)

With the participation of Christa Sommerer

Organised by: Arts Santa Mònica

Coordinated by: Laura Benitez

Ràdio Nativa with Brian Eno. Hosted by Jordi Oliveras:

1. Influence on the local scene. **28.06.2017 / 7-8pm**

2. An inappropriate use of technology. **04.07.2017 / 7-8pm**

3. The political and social dimension. **26.09.2017 / 7-8pm**

Organised by: Arts Santa Mònica

With the collaboration of: Interfícies. A programme of education, mediation and citizenship at Arts Santa Mònica

Vibrations and sounds

A cycle of three round tables on music, education, bodies and experimentation + educational fanzine:

1. Music and popular education tools. **23.06.2017 / 6-8pm**

2. Body and vibrations. **13.07.2017 / 6-8pm**

3. Artistic experimentation / experimental education **14.09.2017 / 6-8pm**

Organised by: Arts Santa Mònica / Interfícies. A programme of education, mediation and citizenship at Arts Santa Mònica

Ambient now! Comusitària

Hack visit. 17.06.2017 / 7pm

A proposal by Comusitària regarding Brian Eno's work, directly exploring the experimental production of sound and spacial ambience that is immersive in nature.

Organised by: Arts Santa Mònica / Interfícies. A programme of education, mediation and citizenship at Arts Santa Mònica

5 CREDITS

EXHIBITION

In the context of the Sònar+D Festival

Curator: Lluís Nacenta

Curation assistant: Maria Fallada

Graphic design: todojuntó.net

Exhibition design: Espai e

Set up: GAMI SCP and Lumen

Organised by: Santa Monica Arts – Department of Culture

With the collaboration of: Sónar+D Festival

ARTS SANTA MÒNICA

Director: Jaume Reus

Exhibitions

General coordination: Fina Duran Riu

Coordination Assistant: Silja Pálmarsdóttir

Editions: Cinta Massip

Technical direction: Xavier Roca

Activities

General coordination: Marta Garcia/Alba Gallardo

Technical department: Eulàlia Garcia

Administration

Head of management: Cristina Güell

Exhibitions department: Mònica Garcia Bo

Management secretary: Chus Couso

Communication

General coordination: Jordi Miras Llopart

Website and social networks: Luis Villalón Camacho

Diffusion: Juanjo Gutiérrez

Arts Santa Mònica Centre for Creativity - Department of Culture
Department of Communication and Press

Email: comunicacio_artssantamonica@gencat.cat
@artssantamonica

Communication and Press Coordination: Jordi Miras Llopart. Email: jmirasl@gencat.cat |
Tel.: (34) 93 316 28 10 – (34) 93 316 28 56. Ext. 13436

Website and social networks: Luis Villalón. Email: lvillalon@gencat.cat | Tel.: (34) 93 556
53 14 (direct) - (34) 93 316 28 19. Ext. 13441

Diffusion: Juanjo Gutiérrez. Email: jgutierrezg@gencat.cat | Tel.: (34) 93 316 28 57 (direct)
- (34) 93 316 28 10. Ext. 13442

Arts Santa Mònica, Centre for Creativity

La Rambla, 7, 08002 Barcelona. Tel. 935 671 110. Website: artssantamonica.gencat.cat. **Free admission**
From Tuesday to Saturday, 11am to 9pm. Sundays and public holidays, from 11am to 5pm. Closed Mondays.
