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## Singing a stream of floating images

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ARTISTS Jaap Blonk and Joan la Barbara are babbling, but the audience is transfixed. They are using their voices as the input for an amazing performance at Ars Electronica, a week-long electronic arts extravaganza in Linz, Austria.

The performances include five groups of Australian artists, among them Linz-based Time's Up (<http://www.timesup.org/>), with Australian researcher Tim Boykett.

The group's work immerses individuals in acts that challenge space and gravity, such as Sensory Circus, Sonic Pong and SPIN.

Other Australian artists are Experimenta, the Next Wave Festival, Electrofringe and ACMI.

In Jaap and Joan's act, three enormous screens behind them display their sounds transformed into lines, curves and bubbles. The audience is equipped with 3D glasses and the objects float out towards the audience.

In one part of the performance, Jaap and Joan stand against a red background like a field of distress flares and seem to speak in streams of white lava and teal oil.

In another, they use their voices to paint: very basic, fat black lines for louder sounds, holding a note steady makes the line stay straight, pitch variations curve and where lines cross, colour appears vibrant.

Jaap paints dots with staccato "ha, ha, ha" sounds while Joan creates sweeping curlicues with trills and swooping notes.

"I was more driven by what I saw on the screen than by what I heard, but intuitively we use some things that relate to each other, some rhythms," Jaap says.

"There are certain tasks we're trying to accomplish," Joan says. "I'd like a little more control, but I think it's a matter of getting used to the instrument. There's also cross-talk between the two microphones. Sometimes I would be singing and doing a line, but because of what he was doing it would get jagged."

The creators of the software, Golan Levin and Zachary Lieberman, say it's early days. "Zach and I are software developers, more than software artists," Golan says.

"The work is about the relationship between sound and image. In the combination of the two, hopefully it succeeds. The ideal would be for Joan to walk away saying the audio is great, this is an album, and I could walk away