



From garden walks to deep dives into the guts of the internet, **Sonica** transforms Glasgow into a land of audiovisual wonder. By **Claire Sawers**

Sonica

Various venues, Glasgow, UK

Starting on Halloween and running for 11 days across arts venues, parks, an old tobacco warehouse and a mausoleum around Glasgow, Sonica festival picks a good time of year to showcase its "Sonic art for the visually minded". The walk around the southside's Hidden Gardens wouldn't have been half as atmospheric on a long Scottish summer's night; instead it's damp and dark by 5pm. Green light oozes out of holly leaves and shines up tree trunks with paper accordions dangling down. Wheezing melodically, the crinkling wings were built by Bristol's Kathy Hinde who has four works in Sonica, including this sound and light installation and *Skylark Walk*, where you walk under an umbrella, glowing purple like a mobile phone emoji, listening to Hinde's recordings of frenzied bird chirps blurring with tranquil piano chords and real rain falling above.

The chilled walk to Hamilton Mausoleum adds drama to the ritual that Luke Fowler creates inside the giant tomb. His family of nine self-built acoustic gourds sit on the stunning marble floor, before being moved around the space, interacting with the building's 15 second echo, one of the longest in the world. Repurposed from cello and sitar strings, with tomato slicer strings tacked on for extra tones, it's

a gorgeous tiny orchestra, played by Fowler, Richard Youngs and Stevie Jones.

Michela Pelusio's *SpaceTime Helix* is a magical thing; using an opto-acoustic instrument invented by the Italian artist to create a dancing spiral from floor to ceiling, glowing and vibrating as she alters the speed and colour, so we hear the air whipping and buzzing. Playing with ideas of string theory and quantum physics, it's like a hypermodern, mesmerizing update on the Indian rope trick.

Less mesmerizing is the opening night's *Aether*, a collaboration between musician Max Cooper and design collective Architecture Social Club. Although the blizzards of pixelated light make a stunning show, Cooper's score runs almost an hour over, and fails to get a packed room of Glaswegians dancing, which seems harsh but fair feedback on his electro soundtrack and its many false summits.

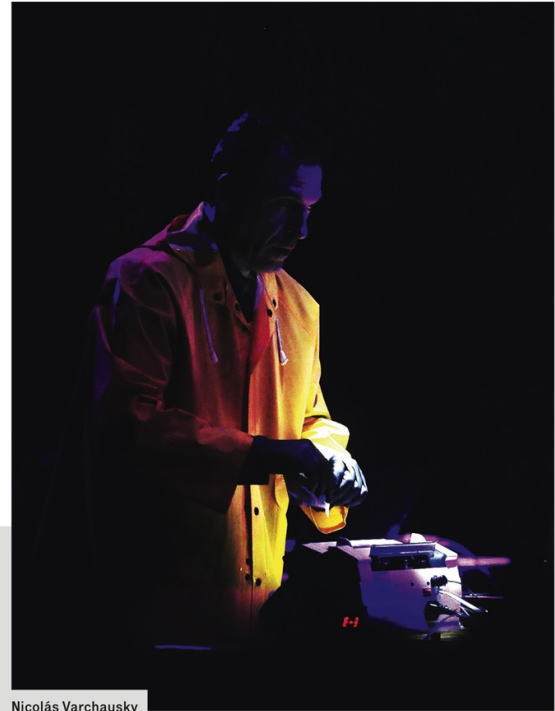
Local artists Robbie Thomson and Sue Zuki (Alicia Matthews) investigate the dark side of the web in *Rottinghuis*, a tense, dripping sludge of industrial techno and brilliant soundbites from a chatroom, where ominous Scottish accents threaten to "take your heid aff" and "throw your mate out the window like a javelin". Argentinian composer Nicolás Varchausky teams up with Glasgow based musician Ceylan Hay for *Money Desk* where Varchausky runs

his cash fee for the gig through money counting machines, riffing on the jamming, clicking mechanical sounds they create and nearly destroying his wages in the process.

Dotted around the festival are various installations to dip into: *Primordial Waters* is an enigmatic pyramid of light shining on bubbling water with drones drawing you closer into a pagan ceremony; Yuri Suzuki's *Furniture Music* displays the sheet music for the McDonald's jingle and Skype ringtone opposite a wall of rainsticks revolving to a pattern of tidal data; and cabosanroque's *Joan Brossa didn't make me* is a wonderful automaton of teaspoons, old typewriters and metal tape measures that rattle out rhythms in the murky light, with spotlights shifting the focus every few minutes.

Nature features heavily in the audiovisual programme, with a thread of work inspired by bird song and bird migration, Hinde considering what the word tweet has come to mean, and several artists examining climate change through digital technology and sounds.

Although the programme has a few low points, with a couple of dreary ambient soundscapes going nowhere very good, Sonica's collection of art also creates many strangely beautiful, phantasmagorical highs and dazzling audio visual wonders. □



Nicolás Varchausky