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## **La Monte Young, Andy Warhol, Minimalism, and Intermedia AV Strategies**

La Monte Young is objectively considered the creator of the Minimal music genre, often casually referred to as minimalism. Trailblazing ambient music composer Brian Eno famously called Young “the daddy of us all” referring to his immense presence in new forms of music which sprung from his influence.<sup>1</sup> Modern genres of music such as minimalism, ambient, and experimental rock tangibly and crucially follow from Young’s innovations in composing sustained tones which are devoid of melody and which strip sound to its most minimal elements. Quoting Young himself, “Nobody ever took an interest in writing sustained tones without melodies over them before me”.<sup>2</sup> His early musical experiments precede the works of minimal musical composers Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Phillip Glass. Young’s 1958 composition *Trio for Strings*, written at the age of 22, employs sustained bowed tones free from vibrato and is considered the first minimalist musical composition in the Western classical tradition.

Not only did Young create a new genre of music, but through the innovative introduction of projected visual elements, slides and intentionally affected proto-psychedelic lighting schemes

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<sup>1</sup> Grimshaw, Jeremy. *Music of a More Exalted Sphere*. University of Rochester, 2005, p.1

<sup>2</sup> William, Robin “La Monte Young Is Still Patiently Working on a Glacial Scale”  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/23/arts/music/la-monte-young-is-still-patiently-working-on-a-glacial-scale.html>.  
August, 19, 2015

into the music performance space, Young created a working immersive template for intermedia , or multimedia, Expanded Cinema performances. These methods would directly influence Andy Warhol and his groundbreaking Exploding Plastic Inevitable multimedia performances. Subsequently, generations of artists and performers who as a matter of fact integrate visual elements into musical elements owe a debt of gratitude to Young's early intermedia experiments.

Young's New York City based performance ensemble, The Theater of Eternal Music, effectively pioneered the aesthetic of Fluxus co-founder Dick Higgins theory of Intermedia performances starting in 1962. By adding multimedia visual elements to musical performances through the integration of his wife Marian Zazeela's slide projector art into the performance space, a seamless audio and visual experience was created. This radical artistic decision, the decentralization of music as the lone element for experience in the performance space in favor of an immersive AV performance was a crucial moment in the history of electric intermedia in the music performance space. No longer were "music" and "projected media" in the case of Young's 1965 Theater of Eternal Music's performance of *The Tortoise*, with its slide projected imagery, isolated media phenomenon. Forever changed was the isolation or separation of performative phenomenal categories. From Dick Higgins "Statement on Intermedia", 1966:

For the last ten years or so, artists have changed their media to suit this situation, to the point where the media have broken down in their traditional forms, and have become merely puristic points of reference. The idea has arisen, as if by spontaneous combustion throughout the entire world, that these points are arbitrary and only useful as critical tools, in saying that such-and-such a work is basically musical, but also poetry. This is

the intermedial approach, to emphasize the dialectic between the media. A composer is a dead man unless he composes for all the media and for his world.<sup>3</sup>

We will further explore the connection between Young's intermedia approach and Andy Warhol's usage of AV elements as Expanded Cinema in his Exploding Plastic Inevitable live performances. Not coincidentally, these events featured Theater of Eternal Music's John Cale performing viola drones such as the ones he produced with Young's ensemble as member of The Velvet Underground. Also to be explored is Warhol and Young's AV collaboration in 1964 at the Second Annual New York Film Festival. Lastly, we will analyze the history of Young's *Dream House* sound and light environments<sup>4</sup> and the integrated media approach which Young and his wife Marian Zazeela pioneered.

### **La Monte Young and the Creation of Minimal Music**

Through formal music composition, and often employing improvisational techniques influenced by jazz and Indian music, Young is known for implementing sustained tones using acoustic instruments, human voice, non-musical objects such as chairs and desk, and electronic sine-wave generators. From an early age, Young was fascinated and influenced by the sweeping sounds of nature in his childhood home of Bern, Idaho.

The very first sound that I recall hearing was the sound of the wind blowing under the eaves and around the log extensions at the corners of the log cabin. As I couldn't see it and didn't know what it was, I questioned my mother about it for long hours<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Dick Higgins *Statement on Intermedia* Something Else Press, New York, July 1967

<sup>4</sup> Dream House Sound and Light Environment. <http://www.melafoundation.org/dream02.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Tom Johnson. *The Minimal Slow-Motion Approach: Alvin Lucier and Others*, Village Voice, 30 March, 1972

Young continued to be influenced by the mysteries of sound surrounding him in his rural environs.

Continuous sounds, man-made as well as natural fascinated Young as a child: the humming harmonics of the step-down transformer at the local plant; train whistles across the river; lathes and drill presses; wind, insects, water, trees. The telephone poles in Bern produced a continuous chord from which, much later, he recalled the four pitches he named the ‘Dream Chord’, basing many of his mature works on it.<sup>6</sup>

In his teenage years in the early 1950s Young moved to Los Angeles and became enamored by Jazz music, studying formally in his high school and performing on saxophone with a Dixieland band before school each morning in 1950. He had a burning passion for jazz and became a working jazz musician as a teen, frequently performing at local dances for pay. Young and his associates were often hired, but apparently never asked back for the next gig as their aesthetic was considered too modern. “I stopped playing in dance bands for money, accepting dance gigs....because I only wanted to play pure jazz,” Young stated.<sup>7</sup>

By 1953 Young began studying classical composition and counterpoint with Leonard Stein. Stein studied with and was a disciple of Arnold Schoenberg, leader of the Second Viennese School.<sup>8</sup> Schoenberg is one of the more important figures in 20<sup>th</sup> century classical music, having created twelve-tone serialism whose technique ensures that all twelve notes of the chromatic scale are played as often as each other note to avoid an emphasis on any one note.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Potter, pp.23

<sup>7</sup> Potter, Keith. *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. pp.24

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pp.24

<sup>9</sup> Perle, George. *Serial Composition and Atonality: An Introduction to the Music of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern*, fourth edition, revised. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press. 1977.pp2

Young was briefly attracted to serialism through his association with Stein, but was ultimately not interested in composing tone rows. Instead he found himself interested in composing works which featured tonal sustenance.

The most revolutionary composition of his early period, and what is considered the watershed moment in musical minimalism is his 1958 composition, *Trio for Strings*. *Trio for Strings* is the first work of music which is completely comprised of uniform unchanging sustained tones. It is free of humanizing expressive elements such as vibrato and features long interjections of silence.

The experience of viewing a live performance of *Trio for Strings* is stark and challenging. There could be no experience more minimal and less emotionally expressive than viewing a string trio playing steady even bows of single tones devoid of vibrato, periodically pausing and leaving significant space for silence before restarting on a new static three note chords. Viewing a performance of *Trio for Strings* is unsettling, uncomfortable, and confrontational in its apparent repetitive banality. Performers appear as statuesque robots performing difficult tasks of labor.

Never before had a classical string composition been aesthetically stripped naked, free from both vibrato and melody. At times perfect intervals between the three instruments create straight harmonic tone lines. Other moments feature clashing tones, creating uneasy waves of atonal dissonance. In comparison to European atonal music from the Second Viennese School, these tones are devoid on swells or vibrato, and sound more like dueling sine wave generators tuned purposely “off” from each other. *Trio for Strings* “establishes his (Young’s) place as the

first composer to discover a truly minimalist language and to develop it in a totally individual way.”<sup>10</sup>

Before moving to New York City in 1960, in 1958, Young moved north of Los Angeles to the Bay area, enrolling at the University of California at Berkeley to study composition. It is in this period in which he discovered the music of John Cage and began his next stage of compositions which employed elements of random chaos and unpredictability. Young had no access to Cage’s music while working on his early pieces in California, which are characterized by sustained static tones reminiscent of the sounds of both nature and machines which transfixed him as a youth in rural Idaho. Young was greatly influenced by John Cage’s experiments in non-performance performances, such as in his seminal *4’33”*, where the performance features nothing acutely musical in the traditional sense as the “music” is simply the incidental noises which happen to occur during performance in the music hall. Young’s interpretation of Cage’s compositional philosophies later helped to create the template for Fluxus performances which Young actively participated in during his early days in New York City.

In a 1966 interview with Young, he states the influence of Cage on his works of this period regarding “the use of random digits and the presentation of what traditionally would have been considered a non-or semi-musical event in a classical concert setting.”<sup>11</sup> One of Young’s early post Cageian pieces, *Poem for Chairs, Tables, Benches, etc. (or other sound sources)* uses

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<sup>10</sup> Potter, Keith. *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. pp.40

<sup>11</sup> Potter, Keith. *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. pp.44

John Cage's chance methods in determining the random duration of tones created by pushing chairs across the floor and creating "live friction sounds".<sup>12</sup>

By 1960 Berkeley awarded Young with a scholarship to study in New York City with Cage and Richard Maxfield. Though Cage was out of town at the time, Maxfield taught him about electronic music and introduced him to David Tudor who in turn introduced Young to avant-garde artists such as Yoko Ono.<sup>13</sup> In turn, he was introduced to who were to become the leaders of the loosely defined Fluxus movement; artist George Brecht, pianist Toshi Ichiyangi, poet Jackson MacLow, designer George Maciunas, and violinist Henry Flynt.<sup>14</sup> Young became curator of the first Downtown loft performance space which was housed in Yoko Ono's 112 Chambers street residence.<sup>15</sup> This space was the beginning of long tradition of alternative performance spaces in downtown New York City, where artists were free to curate programs to their likings and to perform art which was new and often extreme. Fluxus was not yet officially a movement at this point and Young's early experiments in New York City music and performance art were some of the formative moments in the formation of Fluxus.

Some highlights of Young's proto-Fluxus period include works which step away from continuous sustained tones and towards performance art with intermedia performance qualities. *Composition 1960, #10* follows in this mold. In it, the performer is asked to "draw a straight line and follow it".<sup>16</sup> The score consists of a horizontal line drawn on a card. Performers interpreted the instructions in different manners, with Young himself making a chalk line across the floor.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. pp. 45

<sup>13</sup> La Monte Young. <http://20thcenturyclassical.com/young%20link.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Potter, Keith. *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. pp.49

<sup>15</sup> Downtown Music. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Downtown\\_music](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Downtown_music)

<sup>16</sup> Duckworth, William, and William Duckworth Page. "Talking Music: Conversations With John Cage, Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, And 5 Generations Of American Experimental Composers Paperback – May 7, 1999. P.234

Howard Skempton performed the piece by sustaining a single chord on an accordion for two-and-a-half hours.<sup>17</sup> In the tradition of Cage's *4'33"*, *Composition 1960 #4* features tactics in which music is being performed not in a traditional sense by musical performers. Instead, the performance is defined by random incidental noises that may occur in the performance room. In Young's *Composition 1960 #4*, lights are turned off and the audience is instructed that the audience itself had provided the music after the lights had been turned on.<sup>18</sup> Young's *Composition 1960 #5* instructs performers to "Turn a butterfly (or any number of butterflies) loose in the performance area."<sup>19</sup> The purpose of this piece is to challenge the viewer to hear what they would normally simply see. In this case, a fluttering butterfly in standard settings would be considered to be simply beautiful visual spectacle. Who would normally consider the sounds that emanate from its gentle wings to be music?

After this fertile period of creating art which blended the boundaries between music, philosophy, and performance art, Young quickly became disillusioned with many of the other performers in the 112 Chambers street loft. He found their neo-dada Fluxus tactics to be too often hammy and that viewers of these performances were there for entertainment more than for the sake of art.

Young Gradually distanced himself from the Fluxus movement; he had become disappointed that the groups ostensibly deconstructive activities more often settled for

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<sup>17</sup> Potter, Keith. *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. pp.52

<sup>18</sup> La Monte Young. <http://20thcenturyclassical.com/young%20link.htm>

<sup>19</sup> Potter, Keith. *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. pp.50

titillation and contrariness through novelty and humor, and frustrated by its failure to clear the ground for the construction of a new, ontologically more transparent aesthetic.<sup>20</sup>

After frustrations with the Fluxus community and feeling eager to create a new kind of music, Young Soon returned to his interest in sustained tones and creating musical stasis.

Central to Young's work is the concept of "stasis," as opposed to "Fluxus." "Change or flux is inevitable," Young wrote. "Stasis, or remaining the same, is impossible. Therefore, to achieve the static state is the goal, while the state of flux, variation, or contrast, is unavoidable and thus unnecessary as a goal."<sup>21</sup>

### **Young's Post Cageian Period and Subsequent Integrative AV Strategies**

By 1962 Young next transitioned from proto-fluxus conceptual composer back to an improviser and performer. Harkening his jazz influenced youth, he began accompanying on piano soon to be Theater of Eternal Music's saxophonist, Terry Jennings in long improvisational sessions. Young was attempting to discover new grounds where his composition methods could contain the improvisational spirit of jazz music.<sup>22</sup> Young, who began his formal music training on saxophone decided to revisit the instrument and made the seldom used sopranino saxophone, smaller than the soprano, which had recently been popularized by John Coltrane, as his primary performance instrument. The below quotes frames Young's practical shift from a conceptual Cageian aesthetic to more resembling the modal styled improvisational music of Coltrane's early 60's period.

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<sup>20</sup> Grimshaw, Jeremy. *Music of a More Exalted Sphere*. University of Rochester, 2005, pp.146

<sup>21</sup> La Monte Young, Composition 1960 #5. <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/127627>

<sup>22</sup> Potter, Keith. *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. pp.56

Coltrane's exploration of freedom within harmonically well-defined limits in his modal period had an important effect on his (Young's) developing style of harmonic-based music; Young cites the famous improvisations on 'My Favorite Things' as particularly important to him at this time, but has also argued that Indian classical music was an even more significant influence.<sup>23</sup>

From 1962 to 1964, Young developed a different type of blues playing, inspired partly by the "sheets of sound" style of John Coltrane.<sup>24</sup>

Young's aforementioned Cageian period helped to set the formal terms for intermedia Fluxus performances. Young greatly influenced his Fluxus peers with his groundbreaking compositions in which he integrated visual spectacle and philosophical statements into the shell of musical composition. His Theater of Eternal Music period featuring: Young (saxophone), Angus MacLise (percussion), Marian Zazeela (voice drone), John Cale (bowed guitar and viola), Terry Jennings (soprano saxophone), Tony Conrad (Violin) created a new sort of multimedia approach to the performance space.

The affects of custom lighting strategies and slide projector art became an indispensable performance aesthetic, creating a new sort of intermedia in which visual components became completely integrated with the musical performance. The music of The Theater of Eternal Music blended meticulously tuned group drones, akin to the tamboura drones of Indian music, with Young's rapidly fluttering and percussive saxophone as lead instrument. Young was able to create a hybrid of Coltrane's sheets of sounds and simultaneously achieve the percussive affect

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid pp. 63

<sup>24</sup> Grimshaw, Jeremy. *Music of a More Exalted Sphere*. University of Rochester, 2005, pp.175

of Indian tabla drums through his completely unique and otherworldly style of playing saxophone.

Young's Wife Marian Zazeela "established her innovative and exquisite lighting designs as an indispensable dimension of all Young's concerts and, later, of their sound and light environments".<sup>25</sup> Zazeela fully realized her lighting effects in tandem with the Theater of Eternal Music in 1965 at the Filmmakers' Cinematheque Festival of Expanded Cinema. She devised a series of slides which were projected on to the players' silken robes.

Subsequent developments in her work with light – which continues to provide the visual context for all the composer's performances and installations to this day – included an early predilection for green and, in particular magenta theatrical gels, used to color both slides and, later, the shadows cast on ceilings and walls by the elegant, Minimalist, white aluminum mobiles that have become a regular feature of Zazeela's highly imaginative, sculptural use of light.<sup>26</sup>

Certainly visual art that was disorientating or psychedelic in effect, such as Bryion Gyson's 1959 interactive *The Dream Machine*<sup>27</sup> existed before Zazeela's psychedelic style light treatments. However, it is plainly fair to consider these hours long drone performances starting in 1962 accompanied by psychedelic style light and projection treatments as histories cardinal proto-psychedelic expanded cinema AV performances. From the Tate Modern's art terms definition of Expanded Cinema:

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<sup>25</sup> Potter, Keith. *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. pp.60

<sup>26</sup> Potter, Keith. *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. pp.72

<sup>27</sup> *Summer of Love: Art of the Psychedelic Era*. Whitney Museum Of American Art, 2007. pp.71

Expanded cinema is used to describe a film, video, multi-media performance or an immersive environment that pushes the boundaries of cinema and rejects the traditional one-way relationship between the audience and the screen.<sup>28</sup>

In the case of the theater of Eternal Music, the band themselves became the screen, and while music was arguably the centerpiece, the performance was so immersed in the visual component that a truly multimedia performance art was being created in a way that had never been actualized before.

At this point in history, the Beatles still wore three piece suits and psychedelic or liquid light shows of the late 60s were still years away. Young was experimenting with hallucinogenic drugs as far back as 1954, having been introduced to LSD and Peyote by jazz musicians in Los Angeles.<sup>29</sup> The Theater of Eternal Music performed exclusively under the influence of drugs. “We got high for every concert: the whole group”.<sup>30</sup> The germination of a new performance aesthetic based on intermedia, expanded cinema was occurring. The approaching psychedelic era would soon begin and Young and Zazeela’s proto-psychedelic performances must be considered as a watershed moment for the movement’s audio and visual aesthetic.

Young’s befuddling obscurity in the mainstream can squarely be attributed to his infamously protective nature over all aspects of his art. He has but a handful of official recordings released commercially, does not allow for the publishing of his musical scores, and does not allow his music to be performed in public without his sanction. That he is not more

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<sup>28</sup> Expanded Cinema <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/e/expanded-cinema>

<sup>29</sup> Potter, Keith. *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. pp.66

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. pp. 67

commonly understood as the creator of both minimal music and creating the template for the AV components of the psychedelic era is startling.

### **Warhol and Young's 1964 AV collaboration and subsequent Exploding Plastic Inevitable AV Expanded Cinema Strategies**

Before Cale left The Theater of Eternal Music in 1965 to form the Velvet Underground and collaborate with Warhol in the Exploding Plastic Inevitable's multimedia AV extravaganzas, Young and Warhol collaborated on a minimalistic AV presentation at the Second Annual New York Film Festival in autumn of 1964. The year before in 1963 they had collaborated briefly in failed rock n' roll project <sup>31</sup> featuring Young on Saxophone , Jasper Johns as lyricist, Warhol as backup singer, Patti Oldenburg as lead vocalist and husband Claus in an undefined role. <sup>32</sup> "The Project folded when Young, who unlike Warhol did not share the Oldenbergs' interest in commercial culture, abandoned the group."<sup>33</sup>

Young and Warhol's next intersection is an important moment in intermedia and minimalism. In 1964 the two artists collaborated on an AV presentation at the Second Annual New York Film Festival. "Warhol had been invited to project a collection of his films, not in the theater, but in the mezzanine lobby of Lincoln Center's Philharmonic Hall."<sup>34</sup> Warhol produced an installation of his films, each of which was projected separately on individual Fairchild 400 8mm backlit projectors, which had the appearance of small televisions.<sup>35</sup> Already relegated to the

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<sup>31</sup> Andy Warhol: Interview . High Times, August 1977, pp.34

<sup>32</sup> Joseph, Brandon. "My Mind Split Open: Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable." Grey Room, No.8. Summer, 2002, pp. 84

<sup>33</sup> Ibid pp.84

<sup>34</sup> Ibid pp.84

<sup>35</sup> Ibid pp.84

lobby and slightly offended, he was further insulted when the festival literature referred to his installation as a “festival side show”. Rather than showing his films in their entirety, he snidely created three minute clips of his movies and transferred them to repeating loop cartridges. Warhol “eliminated any appreciable (narrative) development while extending their duration indefinitely by means of continuous repetition.”<sup>36</sup> In order to fulfill his dada-esque prank, Young was next commissioned to produce a soundtrack to compliment the suddenly snarky installation.

“Young and Zazeela performed a single sustained tone on a bowed brass mortar. Then, dubbing a separate but identical recording to accompany each of Warhol’s films, Young had all four tapes broadcast simultaneously and at an earsplitting volume. In a manner similar to the continuous frequency environments, or Dream Houses, that Young would conceive at around the same time, the amplification of his soundtracks would not only have filled the lobby, but would have melded the four tones into an acoustical structure that interacted both with their surroundings and each other”<sup>37</sup>

Young’s collaboration with Warhol would be short lived as Lincoln Center officials immediately directed Young to reduce the volume. Young refused to compromise his decision to blast the shrill tones at extremely high volumes and left Warhol’s loops “running harmlessly on the Grand Promenade for the remainder of the festival.”<sup>38</sup> The cinema was immediately de-expanded and the project although important philosophically and historically, was but a flash in the pan. This collaboration, although brief, cements the two artists in at least a reductive sense. The experiment squarely fits into the templates of intermedia and Expanded Cinema and were similar to the experiments which Young and Zazeela were participating in at the same time with the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid pp.85

<sup>37</sup> Joseph, Brandon. “My Mind Split Open: Andy Warhol’s Exploding Plastic Inevitable.” Grey Room, No.8. Summer, 2002, pp. 86

<sup>38</sup> Ibid pp.87

Theater of Expanded Cinema's live performances. Next we will explore the history of Warhol's live multimedia events, arguably, influenced by Young's recent AV innovations in the Theater of Eternal Music.

In 1965, John Cale left the Theater of Eternal Music ensemble to participate in full time activities with Lou Reed and Andy Warhol in The Velvet Underground. Early in the bands tenure, on January 13th 1966 the Velvet Underground performed their first Warhol related multimedia event, Andy Warhol's Up-Tight, at a dinner for the New York Society for Clinical Psychiatry. Similar to the confrontational nature of his installation with Young at the Second Annual New York Film Festival, Warhol's Up-Tight featured loud performances by The Velvet Underground while "the audience found themselves subjected to the guerilla-type assaults of filmmaker Barbara Rubin, who, with the help of Jonas Mekas, thrust flood lights and running movie cameras into their faces. Careening from table to table Rubin and Mekas filmed the hapless psychiatrists' responses to blunt and embarrassing sexual questions."<sup>39</sup> Warhol's Up-Tight was soon replaced by the less wantonly confrontational and more encompassing and outwardly exploratory performance of the Exploding Plastic Inevitable. The EPI used many elements which Warhol employed in Up-Tight. Both events screened Warhol movies, featured live performances by The Velvet Underground and Nico, and included dancers Gerard Malanga and Mary Woronov.

Amongst the AV techniques employed by Warhol and his lighting engineer Danny Williams in the EPI events were the use of:

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<sup>39</sup> Joseph, Brandon. "My Mind Split Open: Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable." Grey Room, No.8. Summer, 2002, pp. 86

Three to five film projectors, often showing different reels of the same film simultaneously; a similar number of slide projectors, movable by hand so that their images swept the auditorium; four variable-speed strobe lights; three moving spots with an assortment of colored gels; several pistol lights; a mirror ball hung from the ceiling and another on the floor; as many as three loudspeakers blaring different pop records at once; one of two sets by the Velvet Underground and Nico...”<sup>40</sup>

A truly immersive, disorientating, drug-fueled, intermedia experience was realized in these multimedia extravaganzas. In 1968 critic Wayne McGuire send an unsolicited letter to *Crawdaddy!* Magazine proclaiming the Velvet Underground, in context with performances in the EPI , “to be prophets of a new age, of breakthrough on an electronic: intermedia: total scale...the only true intermedia group in the country.”<sup>41</sup>

In May of 1966, The EPI and the Velvets performed in San Francisco’s famed Fillmore Auditorium. Although the Velvet’s brutal New York aesthetic failed to captivate the California audience, Graham hired Danny Williams to install a similar lighting system to the one employed by Warhol’s EPI traveling show. <sup>42</sup> These AV innovations became the trademark experience of the Fillmore and set the framework for similar psychedelic light shows which we soon to become mainstream attractions in rock performances of the 60’s. Ultimately, this integrated AV approach as provided by Young in his Theater of Eternal Music performances was propagated and fine tuned by Warhol and subsequently set the framework for generations of live multimedia performances.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid pp. 81

<sup>41</sup> Ibid pp. 81

<sup>42</sup>The Fillmore Auditorium. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Fillmore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fillmore)

It is not the purpose of this report to claim that Warhol “ripped off” Young and Zazeela’s AV innovations, but rather to make historical and aesthetic connections. Some have made blunt assessments of the chain of events and have strong opinions on the matter. The below quote is attributed to Glenn Branca, prime contributors to the post-punk New York City No wave movement of the late 1970s regarding the importance of the immersive multimedia experience provided by the Theater of Eternal Music:

The very first psychedelic light show was done by La Monte Young's group [Marian Zazeela], with this fabulously loud music, drone music of course. Cale was in his band...Then Andy Warhol and Lou Reed came along and lifted the whole idea of a psychedelic light show and the whole idea of quasi-drone music. And that became the Velvet Underground that we know now.<sup>43</sup>

### **Dream House History: Gallery and Museum Culture**

Since 1993 Young and Zazeela have hosted a permanent sound and light art installation at 275 Church St. in New York City. Visitors are welcomed in for a modest suggested donation to immerse themselves in this hybrid space of sound, light, sculptural mobiles, and wall sculptures. All dream houses include loud speakers projecting “frequencies tuned to the harmonic series, generated by electronically produced sine waves creating continuous chordal drones of periodic composite waveforms.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Glenn Branca <http://www.melafoundation.org/quotesmz.htm>

<sup>44</sup> Potter, Keith. *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass*. Cambridge University Press, 2006. pp.77

The first Dream House sound installation was created in September 1966 in Young's loft, where the tone was sustained continuously until January 1970.<sup>45</sup> The first public Dream House was opened in 1969 at Friedrich's Munich art gallery. A partial list of subsequent temporary Dream House installations includes residencies at: MOMA, Rice University, Contemporanea in Rome, The Whitney Museum, The Kitchen, and the University of Illinois.<sup>46</sup>

The most notable Dream House in terms of scale and grandiosity was at the old Mercantile Exchange building housed at 6 Harrison Street from 1979-1985. The Dia foundation spent \$4 million to convert the Mercantile Exchange building into a customized space and provided Young and Zazeela with 22 assistants and a yearly budget of \$500,000.<sup>47</sup> This Dream House came to an abrupt end in 1985 when the oil market collapsed as Dia's sponsorship was financed by oil money from the Schlumberger heirs.

From June 16-October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Dia: Chelsea sponsored the most recent of the temporary Dream House installations in their Chelsea gallery space. In this installation, like all of their others, they create an environment akin to their Church street loft installation complete with purple lighting, Zazeela's light and wall sculptures, and Young's trademarked sine wave drone featuring 34 distinct tones electronically tuned in just intonation. They performed, according to Young, the first uncompromised version of *Trio For Strings* which he considers to be the world premiere, 57 years after its composition in 1958.<sup>48</sup>

La Monte Young and Andy Warhol's created a template for the immersion of music, lighting, and cinema into a unified inseparable experience. The consequences of these actualized

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid pp. 78

<sup>46</sup> Ibid pp. 78

<sup>47</sup> La Monte Young's Dream House. <http://www.vulture.com/2015/06/la-monte-young-dream-house.html>

<sup>48</sup> La Monte Young's Dream House. <http://www.vulture.com/2015/06/la-monte-young-dream-house.html>

moments of expanded cinema are immense in scope. For example, it is impossible to imagine the music video format as unrelated to these early intermedia experiments. The british post-punk ensemble Scritti Politti seemed to recognize the link between Warhol's early AV experiments and the music video format in their 1985 music video, *The Word Girl*. The opening shot features a 16mm projector projecting images behind the band in the tradition of Warhol's *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*. Later shots in the video show the band to be surrounded by multiple screens with projected images, another strategy employed by Warhol. As the music fades, the video closes with a shot of the isolated 16mm projector; its flickering lights remain in effect as homage.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Scritti Politti- *The Word Girl*. 1985. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-8qE1dF8Dc>