

**CULMINATING EXPERIENCE**

**“SPIRAL”**

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Music Production, Technology and Innovation

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## **Abstract**

Spiral is music video production divided in three parts. The theme of the first part is the Universe, the creation and evolution of galaxies. The second part is about nature and its vastness, its richness and the interconnection between the micro cosmos and the macro cosmos. The final part of Spiral is about civilization and its isolation from nature and the Universe and his direction to an uncertain future. The artist will use the skills acquired in video production, photography and sound design to make his CE project.

## Introduction

Through an aesthetic visual and musical approach, the project intends to agree with the basic premise of the Ying Yang philosophy which says that “all things exist as not only inseparable but they attract and complement each other, for example; good and bad”<sup>1</sup>, while disagreeing with Western dualism that says “opposites are separate and independent; good or Bad”<sup>2</sup>. However, the intention of the artist is also to convey that while both Chinese and Western philosophies only consider two fundamental kinds, there are many variables or categories between the extremes. Spiral will include some examples of opposites to illustrate the aforementioned philosophies: Macro cosmos & Micro cosmos, Nature & Civilization, Past & Future, Chaos & Order, War & Peace. Each video and song will take the viewer through a journey of beautiful images, compositions and landscapes with the intention to evoke profound emotions and consciousness of the duality humans have to bare.

One of the purposes of this project is that the creator applies the many tools as well as the acquired knowledge obtained in each semester of the Music Production, Technology & Innovation master’s program (MPTI). The artist has in mind to create music in Ableton Live, using the different techniques learned in the Electronic Production class such as warping and sampling, remixing and MIDI extraction. The Professional and Creative Music Sound Design

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1. Mark Cartwright. "Yin and Yang." *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, [https://www.ancient.eu/Yin\\_and\\_Yang/](https://www.ancient.eu/Yin_and_Yang/) (accessed October 31, 2018)

2. Zalta Edward N (ed.), <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/dualism/>> (accessed October 31, 2018)

class will be taken as well in order to assist the development of the variety of sounds of the project.

The student will also be putting in practice some of the procedures learned in the Hybrid Recording Methods and Strategies to record the instruments utilized to make the music of Spiral. Some of those instruments include but are not limited to: guitar, cello, djembe, violin and percussion. The Advanced Hybrid Recording and Strategies class will also be taken during the Spring semester so that a full understanding of the newest mixing techniques are applied to the project. Recording, mixing and mastering were the main factors that made the student be interested in the MPTI program, so attaining a great sound and music quality will be a measure of the progress achieved during the scholar year.

As of the beginning of the Fall semester, the student did not have experience neither using DSLR cameras, nor video composition, nor editing or any of the rules and techniques to make a video/movie. The hands-on application of the material covered in the Studio Music Video Production class and its advanced version will be crucial to successfully bring this artistic work to completion. This Culminating Experience will include scenes of different natural landmarks in Valencia as well as a vast palette of architectural structures from the past and present of Spain.

### **Review of the state of the art**

The visual aspect of this Culminating Experience is influenced by several artists, special effects creators, film makers, photographers and several camera techniques. The most fundamental influence for the technical aspect and realization of the visual effects for Spiral is

Douglas Trumbull. He is an American film director, special effects supervisor and inventor who has contributed and has been responsible for the special photographic effects in some of the biggest sci-fi films such as *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*,<sup>3</sup> *Blade Runner*,<sup>4</sup> and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*,<sup>5</sup> to name a few.

Fabian Oefner is an international renowned artist born in Switzerland, who uses photography to bring art, science and natural events together. His photographs have been displayed in various countries around the globe and has spoken about his art at TEDx. Fabian's work "Corona"<sup>6</sup> has motivated the desire to carry out the creation of Spiral.

Terrence Malick is an American film director, screenwriter, and producer. His movies have encounter praise but also critic and opinion regarding his work which is very diverse among film scholars to say the least. Nonetheless, five of his films have ranked highly in retrospective decade-end and all-time polls. Terrence Malick's feature "*The Tree of Life*"<sup>7</sup> was awarded the Palme d'Or at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival and won FIPRESCI Award for Best Film Of The Year. This film is also a key influence in the creation of Spiral.

One of the most challenging parts of Spiral is the recreation of the universe and a supernova by using a technique called fluid motion. This method has been used in the past in sci-

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3. *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. Directed by Robert Wise. United States. Paramount Pictures. 1979. Film

4. *Blade Runner*. Directed by Ridley Scott. United States. Warner Bros. 1982. Film

5. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Directed by Steven Spielberg. United States. Columbia Pictures. (1977). Film

6 Fabian Oefner. "Corona." OEFNER, [fabianoefner.com/](http://fabianoefner.com/). (accessed October 31, 2018)

7. *The Tree of Life*. Directed by Terrence Malick. United States. Belga Films. 2011. Film

fi and action movies specially before the use of computer-generated visual effects. However, it is until very recently that liquid motion has been used with artistic purposes mainly by photographers. One of them is Fabian Oefner who has experimented with this technique to create a diverse collection of photos for his expositions.

What makes this project unique and different is that the aforementioned technique and the video sequence will be just a part of a whole project. Each song will have a different visual theme, for one of the songs the goal is to make the viewer to be amazed by the beauty of the outer space. The liquid motion technique will be also used to recreate the reproduction of cells and the exploration of the micro universe. The main theme for another song will be nature, in this case, the music video will feature several natural locations. Another video will cover different types of inquietude, from antique to modern. Each song and video will have the intention to portrait the original concept of complementary opposites.

### **Description**

Spiral is a music video production divided in three parts. The main theme of the first part is the Universe. The video begins with a massive explosion representing the Big Bang that gives birth to light and the creation of matter and time , while the first guitar chords resonate loudly. Sequence after sequence the cosmos expands infinitely and helium, hydrogen and interstellar dust form the nebulas that reveal themselves. Stars emerge, molecular clouds gather to make galaxies and spread across the dark background. They are the furnaces in which the elements of future life are melted. An ocean of fire, resembling pure concentrated energy fills the entire screen, boiling and waiting until it cannot be contained any longer. Several supernovas, one after

the other, explode just as the guitar chords arise, reminding the viewer of the constant evolution and trial and error that has and will continue to occur in the millions of years to come. The intention of the artist in this first part of Spiral is to re-create with the use of practical effects all the succession of events and incidents that happen constantly outside planet Earth in the immensity of the Universe.

The main theme of the second part of Spiral is Nature. The whole video was shot in the city of Valencia and the Valencian Community, particularly a region called Chulilla. This journey through mother Earth begins with a choir singing both in joy and sadness as sun rays leak through leaves and the branches of a tree, just to immediately display a beautiful blue, orange and black feathered bird of the specie called Lampronornis Superbus, small flowers yet to blossom are shaken by the wind. As the singing choir fades out, we can see the reflections of the Sun over the surface of the ancient Mediterranean Sea that never runs dry. The music starts to build up to accompany images of clouds and birds as they moved and fly over the blue Valencian sky. The immensity and beauty of nature are represented in Spiral by the display of the green hills of Chulilla that are so large that the camera needs to pan in order to capture the majesty of the landscape. Images of rocks eroded through thousands of years are proof of the geological history of the planet. Sequences of Ladybirds, ants, wasp, cells and the Universe show the abundance of life at the macroscopic and microscopic level with the intention to remind the audience that everything is interlinked. The natural elements devour and give birth to themselves in a spiral effect.

The main theme of the third and last part of Spiral is Civilization. The main objective of this third part was to convey the idea that humans have been gradually losing touch with nature. Contrasting with the second part which contains images of the micro and macro cosmos to

express the idea that everything is part of a whole, this final video is self-contained. The music is also more melancholic, contrary to the music in the second video which is brighter in mood. For this video the artist wanted to give the idea of hours passing by, so the video begins in the afternoon showing flowers and a field of tall grass that is near a rusty truck and an old house. As sunset approaches, the journey takes the audience to an abandoned factory which artist uses as a symbol of humans forgetting their past. Is night now and we see the moon moving in the dark sky. A new day begins and the exploration around Valencia continues. The camera focuses in things that can be considered insignificant, such as a lock hanging from a chain that has two names and a hart on it, a red petal on the ground or a snail shell stuck to a wooden pole. The goal is to find beauty even in what can be considered insignificant. A new sunset approaches and Spiral ends with the shot of a plant that has grown out from a crack in the pavement and the sun behind it disappearing in the horizon.

### **Innovative Aspects**

#### **Use of practical effects**

The main objective for the production of Spiral was to use exclusively practical effects to recreate the Universe and cells with the intention of getting all the content on camera instead of being generated with software. This gives a more organic feel to the images.

#### **Use of paints and chemicals in a creative way.**

The artist had to learn how to use a variety of paints and consistencies to recreate nebulas, galaxies and supernovas. Experimentation with different combinations was necessary in order to

produce different chemical reactions when the liquids interact with each other. Every shot is unique and cannot be replicated.

### **None expensive gear**

Spiral was made with tools that are affordable and easy to find in hardware stores and online.

## **New Skills acquired**

### **Filmmaking**

Before the making of Spiral, the artist did not have previous experience in how to make a film. This process has provided new knowledge regarding the process of making a film.

### **Cinematography**

For the realization of this CE, it was necessary to learn about different lenses and focal lengths as well as lighting.

### **Editing**

Editing is essential to create a video. Premiere Pro was used to edit Spiral.

### **Sound Design.**

Ableton and Serum were fundamental to make the music on the project. The artist did not have previous experience using them before the Master program.

## **Challenges**

Becoming efficient at using the camera was of extreme importance since the CE project is completely video based. Shooting in natural light was a very good way at learning how to expose since natural light changes constantly. Learning the process of video shooting, editing, story telling and color grading in a short period of time was challenging but also very rewarding fulfilling. The re-creation of Space was an expected as well as unexpected challenge. The Universe part was very difficult to make since it required much experimentation with paints and how to mix them. For some shots a denser consistency was needed to create nebulas while for other shots a more water-like consistency was necessary to recreate supernovas and galaxies. To finish the whole CE project on time for delivery was challenging as well, the Space part took longer than expected to make and caused delays in the making and editing of the other videos.

## **Future Ramifications**

In its inception, Spiral was planned to be a four-part project, with the fourth part being about Artificial Intelligence. The artist plans to make that fourth part to give Spiral a conclusion. Experimentation with microscopes to create abstract videos and photos is also an important goal for the future. The artist also wants to photograph and film wildlife as well as well as underwater. Selling and licensing footage and artistic work is also part of the plans for the future. Make all types of video work such as corporate video, music video and commercials.

## **Conclusion**

Spiral is a music video production divided in three parts, Space, Nature and Civilization. The goal of the first video is to recreate the beginning of the Universe and the formation and evolution of nebulas, galaxies and supernova explosions to portray the vastness of Space. The goal of the second video is to show the beauty of nature, the micro cosmos and the macro cosmos and how everything is interconnected. The final video is about how society isolates itself from nature and moves to an uncertain future. Both video and music were created by the artist. The student went to Berklee College of Music Campus Valencia with the goal of acquiring new skills in other areas, by the end of the program he has obtained knowledge in sound design, audio recording and video production. The goal was achieved.

### Appendix A. Plan of Action

Month	Development stage
October	Location Scouting
November	Collection of materials: fish tank, inks, acrylic paintings, oils
December	Shooting at Sierra Calderona and Sierra Altaina
January	Shooting in Barcelona
February	Shooting the Universe sequence
March	Shooting during Las Fallas and beginning writing 3rd song
April	Audio & Video Editing
May	Audio & Video Editing
June	CE Submission

## **Appendix B. Budget**

ITEM	PROPOSED	REAL
<b>MATERIALS (disposables)</b>		
Hard Drives	\$150	\$0
Memory cards	\$50	\$50
<b>EQUIPMENT</b>		
<b>HARDWARE</b>		
COMPUTER (purchase)	\$2,500	\$0
Steadycam	\$150	\$150
CAMERA (rental) 2 days	\$120	\$120
<b>SOFTWARE</b>		
ABLETON	\$349	\$0
Adobe Creator	\$220	\$220
Pro Tools	\$500	\$0
<b>PERSONNEL</b>		
Cello Player	\$600	\$0
ENGINEER	\$300	\$0
MIXER	\$300	\$0
EDITOR	\$300	\$0
<b>STUDIO</b>		
BERKLEE daily x # of days	\$XX	\$0
HOME daily x # of days	\$XX	\$0
<b>OVERHEAD</b>		
RENT	\$700	\$780
POWER	\$40	\$0
WATER	\$40	\$0
GAS	\$13	\$0
INTERNET	\$50	\$0
PHONE	\$25	\$25
<b>FEES</b>		
YOUR FEE	\$500	\$0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$6,907</b>	<b>\$1,345</b>

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