

Sidney Fels

Iamascope

Inside the Iamascope

Kaleidoscopes have captured imaginations all over the world since they were first invented by D. Brewster in 1816. Nearly two hundred years later, a modern digital variation of this very interactive device has been created. The interactive kaleidoscope — the Iamascope — combines state-of-the-art computer video, graphics, vision and audio technology to create sound and imagery in an aesthetically uplifting interactive device.

A typical experience of the work starts with a participant entering a darkened space with a large screen showing a still kaleidoscopic image. Across the room a brightly coloured or patterned backdrop is draped behind the participant. The participant is supplied with a wireless microphone attached to an audio signal processor which produces and enhances an echo effect, in keeping with the reflective visuals. These additions enhance the sense of being in a chamber of reflective surfaces. Before stepping between the screen and the backdrop, the participant is still virtually a member of the audience, but she is encouraged to speak and experience the echoing quality of her own voice. Next she is guided into the Iamascope. Upon entering this zone, a cascade of sound and kaleidoscopic images in motion engulfs her. When she becomes oriented to the zone of reflection, she usually first experiments with creating images, for example finding her face, hands, or a colourful patch of clothing, and manipulating its kaleidoscopic image on the screen. Before long, she usually switches to exploring the bands of sound in the image, and easily discovers high notes on the periphery, descending to low notes in the core of the image. These experimentations engage the audience as the participant develops a certain level of intimacy, or degree of control, and begins to synthesize the audio visual elements of the Iamascope. A short personal symphony of sound and imagery ensues, leaving the participant with an elated sense of discovery, and a desire to spend more time inside the Iamascope.

The Iamascope may also be used to facilitate intimacy between two or more people as performers. The performers inside the Iamascope can learn to move together and respond to each other within the image and corresponding sounds. With coordinated effort, a greater degree of control should be attainable by multiple performers than by one.