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Red Bull Music Academy's "Hardcore Activity in Progress"

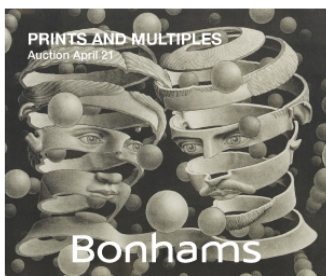
BY CRAIG HUBERT | MAY 16, 2014



Last year, the Red Bull Music Academy hosted "Drone Activity in Progress" at the Knockdown Center in Queens, where this year's "Hardcore Activity in Progress" will be held. (Courtesy of Christelle de Castro/Red Bull Content Pool)

The Red Bull Music Academy, as part of their series of events happening all across New York City throughout the month, is staging what appears to be their largest and most intense spectacle where most lovers of art and music will never step foot: Maspeth, Queens.

"Hardcore Activity in Progress," an audio-visual installation featuring 15 musical acts on three stages, with visuals created by **Nuit Blanche** and a team of collaborators, will take place on May 16 at The Knockdown Center, a 50,000 square-foot former glass factory located on Flushing Ave. that has become one of the most exciting multi-purpose art spaces in the city, even if it's hard to find.



And it was in this space where Ethan Vogt and Ken Farmer, the creative forces behind **Nuit Blanche**, started work on the massive project. "We start with the location spatially," Vogt said in a phone interview. "All of our work is site-specific, so that means the history of place, it's current use, things like that. We also start with the visitor, the spectator, the experience. How people movie through the space, where they're going to gather, where they're going



to have experiences that are large-scale experiences, as spectacles, and where they're going to having more private moments.”

The two began working on the “Hardcore Activity” project months ago, first talking to the Red Bull Music Academy programmers about their vision for the event, then reaching out to a network of artists they wanted to work with. Using the central concept of the show, which attempts to present the idea of hardcore or extremity in its many sonic forms, the two began work on visuals that would not merely match the music, but work in collaboration.

“We wanted to echo the intense musical experience with something that is similarly gripping, Vogt said. “We were interested in having some of the visual content create an anxiety that is a good match with the musical space. The other idea we had for this one was thinking about how light can bounce around a space the way sound does, the idea of reverberations.”

Multiple areas of the space will occupied with different projects, all featuring the work of a variety of visual artists and musicians, each one encompassing distinct ideas that explore the central themes of intensity and the concept of hardcore. The visual component will act not as a mirror but as another piece of this large and complicated puzzle.

“We're interested in how visual content can be part of a larger installation, “ Farmer added. “So having these adjacent rooms and having a sort of ambiance be the tone rather than making sure it times perfectly with the music, was important. And it also touches on one of the aspects of our approach: some of this music may be incredibly intense, but we may be doing slower ambient, almost flowy visual content with that.”

Intense may be too generous a word. Eardrums will be pounding following a night that includes live music from experimental composer Tim Hecker, the heavy metal group Nepal Death, the rapper Gunplay, and free jazzers The Thing, to name only a few.

“Because of the natural flow of the space, and because there are three stages that will have concurrent performances, that will create an exciting audience experience,” Farmer added. “It's not the typical festival-type herd where one show ends and you wander over to see the other show. There's an amorphous feeling throughout.”

Members of the audience floating through the Knockdown Center will encounter a primary installation room, which Farmer calls an homage to Donald Judd's installation in Mafra and includes a grid of nine 4x2 foot boxes that each has a tone of light directly above it, resembling the work of Anthony McCall. Another room was created with the artist Canyon Castator, who built what the guys at Nuit Blanche have been informally calling “The Fur Fort.” Castator designed a geodesic dome wrapped with a 60-foot canvas that goes around the perimeter, with the top layer a combination of large sheets of fur and actual fur jackets. Inside the dome, a series of paintings — what Farmer laughingly calls “Caveman Rothko” — are displayed at the center along with a color glissando projected on a totem pole running up the middle.

Projected on the main stage will be new video works from Fabio Scacchioli along with remixed sections of “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari” joined by lights that mirror and intersect with the expressionist images of the film. The inspiration for the projects came from the desire to move away from the standard and canned visuals that accompany so much live music and toward something that works in unison.

All of this wouldn't be possible with out the Red Bull Music Academy, which is not just providing the space for these artists to explore ideas, but the budget to do them correctly. “I do think that what Red Bull is doing with music is significant,” Farmer added, echoing the sentiment. “Their impact of the events all around the world is one of the more impressive things happening within different music scenes.”

Impressive, yes. Loud, certainty. Exciting, definitely.



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