



TONI DOVE'S INTERACTIVE FEATURE FILM *SPECTROPIA*

The New York-based artist **Toni Dove** produces unique, highly imaginative, embodied hybrids of film, installation art and experimental theater. In her work, performers and participants interact with an unfolding narrative, using interface technologies such as motion sensing and laser harp to “perform” on-screen avatars.

A culmination of these multimedia explorations, ***Spectropia*** is a cinema-scale live-mix movie performance event form that is part video game, part feature film and part VJ mashing. At its heart is a “scratchable” movie, richly beautiful and exhilarating in its own right, performed by improvising “DJs” who actively “play” it like an instrument. Throughout, the audience is aware of the mutable, improvisational nature of the experience, as well as the responsive architecture at work, while remaining engaged with *Spectropia*'s narrative thread. They are allowed to see through characters' eyes, hear their interior thoughts, and even talk with them via Dove and her co-performer, **R. Luke DuBois** in a post show Q&A.

Spectropia boasts a singularly diverse lineup of artists. The film's cast features the actress **Aleksa Palladino** (Sidney Lumet's *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead* and *Find Me Guilty*; Todd Solondz's *Storytelling*) as Spectropia and **Helen Pickett** (recently with the Forsythe Ballet of Frankfurt and The Wooster Group) as Sally. **Elliott Sharp** composed the original score. **Debbie Harry** sings the vocals on the song “This Time, That Place.” The artist **Perry Hoberman** contributed to the set design for Spectropia's studio with an interactive installation of used computer equipment. R. Luke DuBois, co-author of the Jitter software suite for real time manipulation of matrix data, is the project's software designer.

In the presentation, a seated audience faces a large central screen, flanked by two smaller screens. To the side of the stage two player/performers stand at a stage “instrument” that uses video motion sensing and a light-and-laser harp to interact with the media of the piece. Through movement and speech the players navigate through the movie almost as if it were a three-dimensional architectural space, triggering digital video segments that are delivered dynamically from laptop computers to projectors.

Spectropia is a hybrid of sci-fi and film noir, with elements of time travel and telepathy. The story opens in the future where Spectropia, a young woman in her twenties, lives in the salvage district of an urban center known as the Informal Sector. It's a black market subculture of salvage and barter where knowledge spans only a person's experience and recorded history is forbidden. This culture of consumption floats on islands of garbage; saving anything is punishable by law. Spectropia is addicted to the illegal activity of collecting artifacts from the past. Her companion, a cyborg creature called the Duck, (part human and part wireless robot) runs a black market business in retro objects—their livelihood. The Duck is a babysitter bot, in loco parentis, programmed by Spectropia's father, who disappeared in time while searching for a lost inheritance. Using a machine of her own invention to search the past for her father, she discovers William, a man from 1931 New York City after the Great Crash. Spectropia is accidentally transported to NYC in 1931 when her machine short circuits and she finds herself in the body of another woman, Verna de Mott, an amateur sleuth. A mystery and a romantic triangle unfold across centuries as two women in one body drive one man crazy.

Following presentations at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, OH, November 1-3, 2007, REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney CalArts Theater, in Walt Disney Concert Hall) in Los Angeles, November 9-10, 2007, and The Zero1 Global Festival of Art on the Edge in San Jose, June 6-7, 2008, **Spectropia** is heading to other festivals and cities around the world over the upcoming months.

Spectropia is the second in Dove's series of interactive fictions on the unconscious of consumer economies. The first, *Artificial Changelings*, debuted as an interactive installation at the Rotterdam Film Festival in 1998, and was featured in the groundbreaking exhibition "Body Mécanique" at the Wexner Center for the Arts in 1999, at the Institute for Studies in the Arts at Arizona State University in March of 2000, and in the exhibition "Wired" at the Arts Center for the Capital Region in Troy New York, 2000.

Artificial Changelings has been internationally recognized as innovative in interactive storytelling and immersive interface design. Stephen Johnson, author of "Interface Culture" has praised *Artificial Changelings* for using "technology to advance a genuine artistic vision," while Bill Jones in *ArtByte Magazine* says the installation "not only sets a new mark for interactive works, but opens the door to a new form of aesthetic experience where the viewer joins a fictional character through the interface in an uncanny way that changes forever our conceptions of object and subject, narrative and fiction."

More About Toni Dove

Toni Dove lives and works in New York City. Her work has been presented in the United States, Europe and Canada as well as in print and on radio and television. Her projects include ***Archeology of a Mother Tongue***, a virtual reality installation with Michael Mackenzie, Banff Centre for the Arts (see the book *Immersed in Technology* from M.I.T. Press) and the interactive movie installation, ***Artificial Changelings***.

Dove served by appointment on the 2000/2003 Government Advisory Committee on Information Technology and Creativity, Computer Science and Telecommunications Board, National Research Council, USA. The book *Beyond Productivity: Information Technology, Innovation, and Creativity* was released from the National Research Council as a report by this committee.

Dove has received numerous grants and awards including support from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Greenwall Foundation, the Langlois Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, New York Foundation for the Arts, The LEF Foundation, and the Eugene McDermott Award in the Arts from M.I.T. Her website is <http://www.tonidove.com>.

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QUOTES

on *SPECTROPIA*:

"Visually stunning...dazzling"

"Fans of offbeat cinema or science fiction might find aspects of Spectropia intriguing, because moments suggest an eerie blend of *The Big Sleep*, *Brazil* and *La Jetee*."

"Shifting eras and moods are powerfully evoked by the design, from the rich cinematography and costumes to Elliott Sharp's eclectic soundtrack."

- *The Columbus Dispatch*, November 2007

"The future of cinema?"

- *Québec Micro*, October 2007

on *ARTIFICIAL CHANGELINGS*:

"Dove aims to intensify the cinematographic experience and to link together observer and character in a radically new way."

- Sabine Himmelsbach, "The Cinematic Imaginary after Film," ZKM/Center for Art and Media, Germany

"Toni Dove is one of the few artists to move beyond a simple explication of the interface, altering the viewer's relationship to her work while advancing new concepts in cinematic genre and narrative."

- Bill Jones, *Artbyte*