



SPECIAL EVENT

Alternative Music. Speculative Histories of Music

8 November–1 December

Okno na Kulturę Gallery
17 Krakowskie Przedmieście Street

The *Alternative Music* exhibition presents speculative, alt-historical scenarios of music development, in contrast to the hierarchical vision of cultural progress according to which we consider current musical conventions – to paraphrase Leibniz – to be ‘the best of all possible types of music’. We will take visitors on a journey starting in Neanderthal caves, running further through the Inca plateaus, to the Baroque, prompting them to reflect not only on the history, but also on future developmental directions for musical culture.

Exhibition

*Alternative Music.
Speculative Histories of Music*

Exhibition Curators:

panGenerator Group:

Jakub Koźniewski

Krzysztof Cybulski

Krzysztof Goliński

Co-ordinator:

Marcin Kuropatwa

Special Event

Alternative Music. Speculative Histories of Music

The *Alternative Music* exhibition raises questions about the history of music and possible alternative scenarios for its development.

When designing the exhibition, we adopted the evolutionary paradigm of music development, postulating that current musical conventions, in fact, largely result from the accumulation of random events, and not from a teleological or even finalistic process inevitably leading to the currently adopted forms. This conclusion is in contradiction with the still quite common, hierarchical narrative, according to which earlier musical forms are considered more primitive or inferior, while today's ones – the last rung of the ladder of development. This narrative is often based on Eurocentric and postcolonial assumptions, assigning Western culture a dominant role in human history.

The exhibition attempts to break these patterns by proposing a thought experiment in which we go back to earlier eras, and even prehistoric times, to imagine alternative paths for the development of music and instruments. As part of this speculative journey, three hypothetical scenarios are presented, manifested by three fictional instruments.

Craniovox is an attempt at imagining what music would have looked like if the Neanderthals had not gone extinct and their culture had developed independently. The Neanderthals, although anatomically similar to *Homo sapiens*, had limited vocal capabilities. In this alternative scenario, we assume that they created a device called craniovox ('skullphone') that helped them amplify and modulate sound. By using animal skulls, they were able to create their own, primitive musical instruments that not only supported communication, but also served as a tool for expressing emotions and creating music. What if their culture survived and developed in parallel with the culture of *Homo sapiens*? What would be the differences in the music created by two psychophysically different human groups?

Viola voltara is our second speculative scenario; it takes us to the Baroque era, but with a key change in history. Let us imagine that the discovery of electromagnetism and the development of electronic sound amplification took place earlier, which enabled the electrification of such string instruments as, for example, viola da gamba. Instead of following the path of the development of the electric guitar, Baroque luthiers could have introduced electric versions of their instruments while maintaining the ornaments and aesthetics characteristic of the era. The electric viola da gamba, provided with six strings and electromagnetic transducers, would have become a solo instrument, gaining popularity among young listeners. In this alternative world, the electric guitar would have never become widely popular, and the viola da gamba would have been the dominant instrument in popular music.

Quiputron represents the third vision. This time, we are going to South America. What would the history of music look like if the Inca and Aztec civilisations had not been colonised by Europeans? How would music technology and culture develop in a world where *quipu* – a knot-based information recording system – would have evolved into an advanced medium of communication and sound creation? In this alternative world, the quiputron is a knot-based futuristic musical device from the 1980s, acting as a music sequencer. It is an instrument rooted in the ancient Inca culture, representing an alternative version of the history of music, where Machu Picchu has survived to modern times and has become the hub of progressive pop music.

The exhibition provokes reflection on the randomness and diversity of possible paths for the development of music and instruments. Each of the presented scenarios is an attempt at imagining how diverse the musical forms could be if some key historical events had turned out differently. Thus, the exhibition not only broadens our understanding of the history of music, but also opens a space for discussion on potential future developmental directions for musical culture.



NATIONAL
CENTRE FOR
CULTURE
POLAND

4.11–1.12. — Special Event. *Alternative Music. Speculative Histories of Music*

panGenerator

PanGenerator is a new media art and design group based in Warsaw, founded by Piotr Barszczewski (former member), Krzysztof Cybulski, Krzysztof Goliński and Jakub Koźniewski. Since 2010, the group has been creating unique projects exploring new means of creative expression and interaction with the audience. Their works combine the ephemeral digital world with the physical world.

PanGenerator mixes bits and atoms to create engaging, dynamic and tangible experiences in opposition to the typically static, hermetic and inaccessible conventions common in the traditional, mainstream practice of 'modern art'.

Works by the panGenerator collective have been presented in numerous art and design galleries as well as at festivals and exhibitions,

for example: Ars Electronica, ZKM Karlsruhe, Dutch Design Week, Milan Design Week, DMY, Athens Digital Art Festival, LPM, Łódź Design, Pause Fest Melbourne, Node Festival, Design Museum Holon, PrintScreen Festival, nuit numérique, WRO Media Art Biennale, SXSW, Warsaw Autumn, Przemiany Festival, European Culture Congress, Art+bits festival, patch lab, Kordegarda Gallery and many others.

