

INKBLOT

Serge Bulat



Serge Bulat is a Moldovan-American multidisciplinary artist, composer and sound designer, who has been contributing to both European and American art scenes, exploring various mediums: from music and visuals to video games, radio and theater productions. Artist's most notable works are "Queuelbum" (the concept project that won an IMA award for Best Electronic Album Of The Year), the immersive video game "Wurroom" (created in collaboration with Michael Rfdshir), the audiovisual installations "Third World Walker" and "INKBLOT", presented at festivals and conferences around the world including NYCEMF / USA,

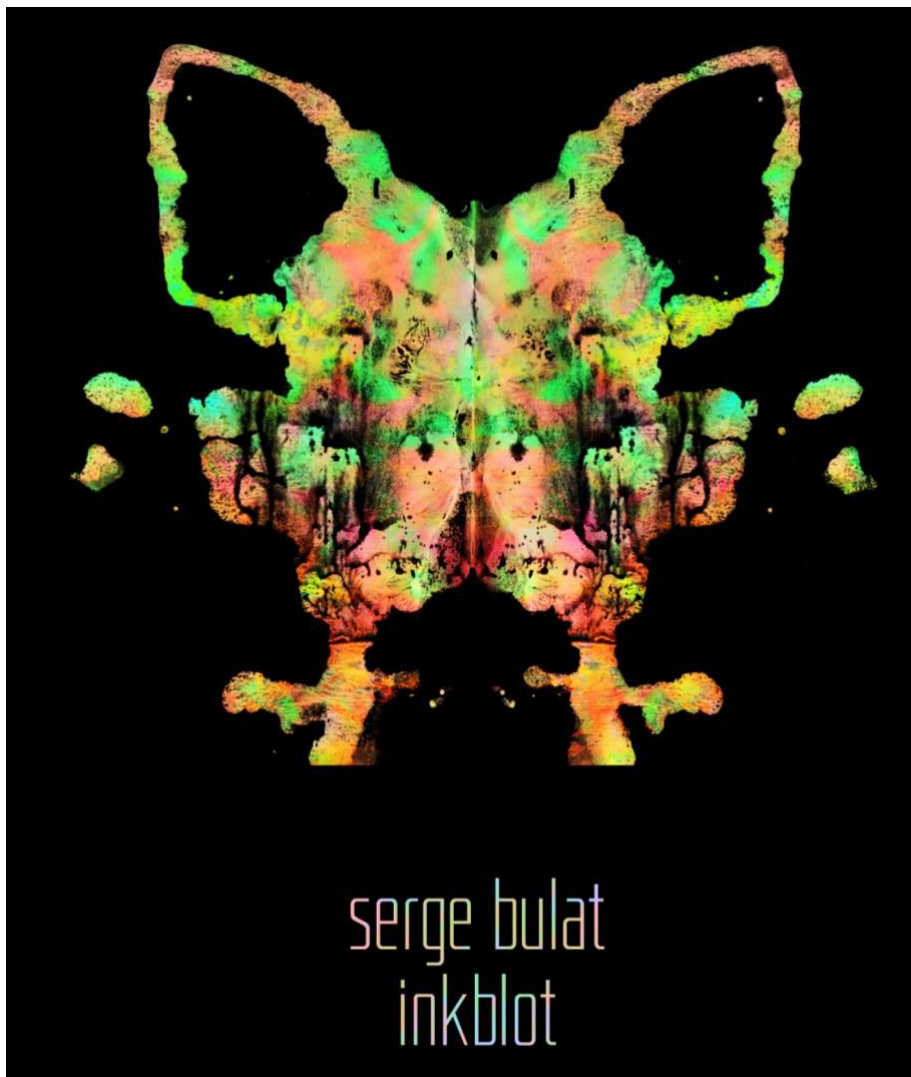
Convergence / UK, Technarte / Spain, New Music Gathering / USA, and Video Art Forum / Saudi Arabia. Bulat's artistic approach is often perceived as a meditation on arts, philosophy, science, and society; and deals with such diverse subjects as creativity, technology, reality, culture, and identity. Recent artistic activities include the release of the multi-format albums "Wurmenai", "Similarities Between Fish And A Chair" (a collaboration with artists from 10 countries), and the score for the experimental video game "Isolomus".

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INKBLOT is an audiovisual experience/presentation, designed to trigger the listener's imagination to demonstrate our unique ability to process data and create a "personal reality" construct. Much like in the psychological evaluation, the audiovisual inkblots are expected to produce an association or feeling, which the audience interprets uniquely. The project takes the standard test one step further by including an additional sense: hearing; and aims to reveal more information about ourselves. Stimulated by both visuals and sound, the subjects are invited for a "self-diagnosis", formed through the sensory experience. The success of the test depends solely on the testee, based on the idea that the participant is both the experiment and the experimenter. Described by Bulat as "listening parties for the thinkers", INKBLOT is aimed to bring back the wonder of sound, interactivity, and conceptualism in music.

FIGURE 1 – Inkblot poster art.



Source: Serge Bulat (2019). Artwork by Michael Rfdshir

Inkblot test, developed by the Swiss psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach in 1921, is a psychological test in which the subject's interpretations of images were used to reveal characteristics or emotions to help detect underlined thought disorders with such diseases as schizophrenia and psychosis. It has also become famously known as the "personality" test. In modern medicine, neuropsychologists are performing neuropsychological evaluations, which mirror the inkblot test, for cognitive disorders, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, dementia, as well as newly found diseases since the original test, including anxiety disorder. This test still heavily relies on the usage of visuals to determine problematic areas of the brain.

The purpose of the INKBLOT project is to add a variable and see if the addition of a sense could contribute to the accuracy of the diagnosis, as well as demonstrate the effects of sound on our perception. The inclusion of audio is designed to fill the blanks; compensate, improve, or disprove the proposed theory as such.

In nature, some animals solely rely on one sense for survival due to weakness or lack of others; whether it would be scent (African Bush Elephant), sound (bats), sight (octopus), touch (spiders), taste (catfish) or even radiation (snakes). This forms my theory that sight may not be the strongest tool to define our mental capabilities. The given idea came to light while thinking about a test subject that is blind; how accurate then a traditional neuropsychic test is?

With the addition of another variable, as practiced in nature; focusing on the subject's strongest and most dependable sense, will we find a map to underlined thought disorders and what they actually mean? Will we formulate personality, and define normality?

In Edwin A. Abbott's "Flatland" (2013), the protagonist enters the worlds governed by the absence or existence of a dimension, observing how such changes the rules of "being", creating a new philosophy. Would another "dimension", change and enhance our perception?

FIGURE 2 – Inkblot card No 2: Creative Noise.



Source: Serge Bulat (2019). Artwork by Michael Rfdshir

Responses, based on interaction with INKBLOT, might shed more light on the personality concept, along with what is already “programmed” in us. The experiment points how immensely subjective our perception is, and through this very uniqueness, we make a version of reality. This feature displays an intriguing yet revealing portrait...

I strongly disagree with the definition of “normal” and hope that this project will broaden the understanding of individuality, embracing differences, and treating them as advantages and not faults. (BULAT, 2021)

The sound piece is created from various methods of audio processing and features manipulation, design/effects, field recording from four countries, NASA recordings, analog and digital instruments.

The visuals feature custom Inkblot cards co-created with Michael Rfdshir, generative/digital art, animation, claymation and experiment-related information. INKBLOT is designed for stereo performance, to be experienced on high fidelity speakers that support low frequencies. The video is to be projected on a screen or a monitor.

Watch Inkblot presentation: <https://youtu.be/On1A4yWrJnM>

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