



Artists working with sound and light promise to illuminate Luminaria, the new citywide arts celebration on Saturday.

by Dan Goddard
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Stuart Allen and Potter-Belmar Labs — made up of Leslie Raymond, head of the New Media program at UTSA, and Jason Jay Stevens, a sound artist and sculptor — are collaborating on "The Mixing Chamber," an all-day, interactive audio-visual installation in the Cowden Gallery at the San Antonio Museum of Art.

"They're creating a luminaria for Luminaria," said David Rubin, SAMA's curator of contemporary art. "I think these are some of the most cutting-edge artists in town, and we're thrilled to be a satellite space for Luminaria. Stuart, of course, created the large installation with sailcloth in the Great Hall, and he suggested collaborating with Potter-Belmar Labs. It should be a sound and light extravaganza."

"The Mixing Chamber" will feature large screens made of sailcloth mounted between the columns down the center of the spacious Cowden Gallery. Projected on the screens will be abstract images of foliage in red, blue and green accompanied by a multi-channel audio piece of various tonalities moving in and out of phase.

As the different colors and sounds overlap, hues and tones will shift depending on where visitors stand, creating a unique experience for everyone who sees it.

"When people walk through the projections, then they will become part of the piece," Raymond said. "You'll see flickering, flame-like lights. The images are trees, but they'll change so that they are abstract. The work will never be the same throughout the day." Then, as part of the main "Arts Night in San Antonio" celebration downtown beginning at 6 p.m. Saturday, more than 20 of Raymond's New Media students will be showing artists' videos as projections and on TV monitors in the Houston Street Galleries.

"My students, both undergraduates and graduates, will be doing a variety of things," Raymond said. "New media is a term I've come up with to describe what artists are doing with video, sound and other electronic media. It's also called 'transmedia,' 'digital art' and 'interactive cinema.' Of course, video and sound recording aren't new, but what artists can do with them now using computers is amazing, even though not all new media requires new technology."

Generally, though, new media means artists working with digital technology from a fine arts perspective.

Raymond and Stevens, both originally from Detroit, met in graduate school at the University of Michigan. They have been collaborators since 1999, taking their work to festivals around the world. Their six-part "Settings" series recently won first prize at the Orilla '06 Festival in Santa Fe, Argentina. Last fall, they had a work in the Lausanne Underground Film and Music Festival in Switzerland.

They made their San Antonio debut in 2006 at Salon Mijangos and have become active leaders of the emerging new media art community in San Antonio. The couple has bought a studio/warehouse on Roosevelt Street in the Southtown area.

They have a new work, "Fortune," a kind of high-tech Tarot card reading involving random video selections, which they premiered Feb. 29 at the Sheldon Art Gallery at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. They plan to show it on a West Coast tour set for May 15-21 that will take them to galleries and art spaces in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Oakland, Calif., and Eugene and Portland, Ore.

The "Mixing Chamber" is designed as a distillation of all their work.

"Ideally, your position in the room will give a different experience depending on where you stand," said Stevens, who became interested in sound art while playing in punk bands during the 1980s. "The sound portion will sound like three notes on a piano, but since sound is made up of waves, when they meet or overlap, there will be a change in rhythm."

Allen said the collaboration between the three artists represents a mingling of common interests. His installation of large cloth panels suspended from the ceiling of the Great Hall has become a popular fixture at SAMA, subtly altering the quality of light throughout the day.

"Since I am interested in the way light changes colors and they are working with different colors of light, there's a lot of overlap in our core interests," Allen said. "We hope it will make people feel like active participants in Luminaria. It'll be running from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday, and no two moments should be alike."