



PRESS RELEASE

OCTOPUS BRAIN STORMING:

Empathy

Collaborative live experiment & performance by
Victoria Vesna and Mark Cohen.

Premiere Invitation Only event: October 7th, 12:00 – 1:30pm
Luskin Conference center Grand Opening

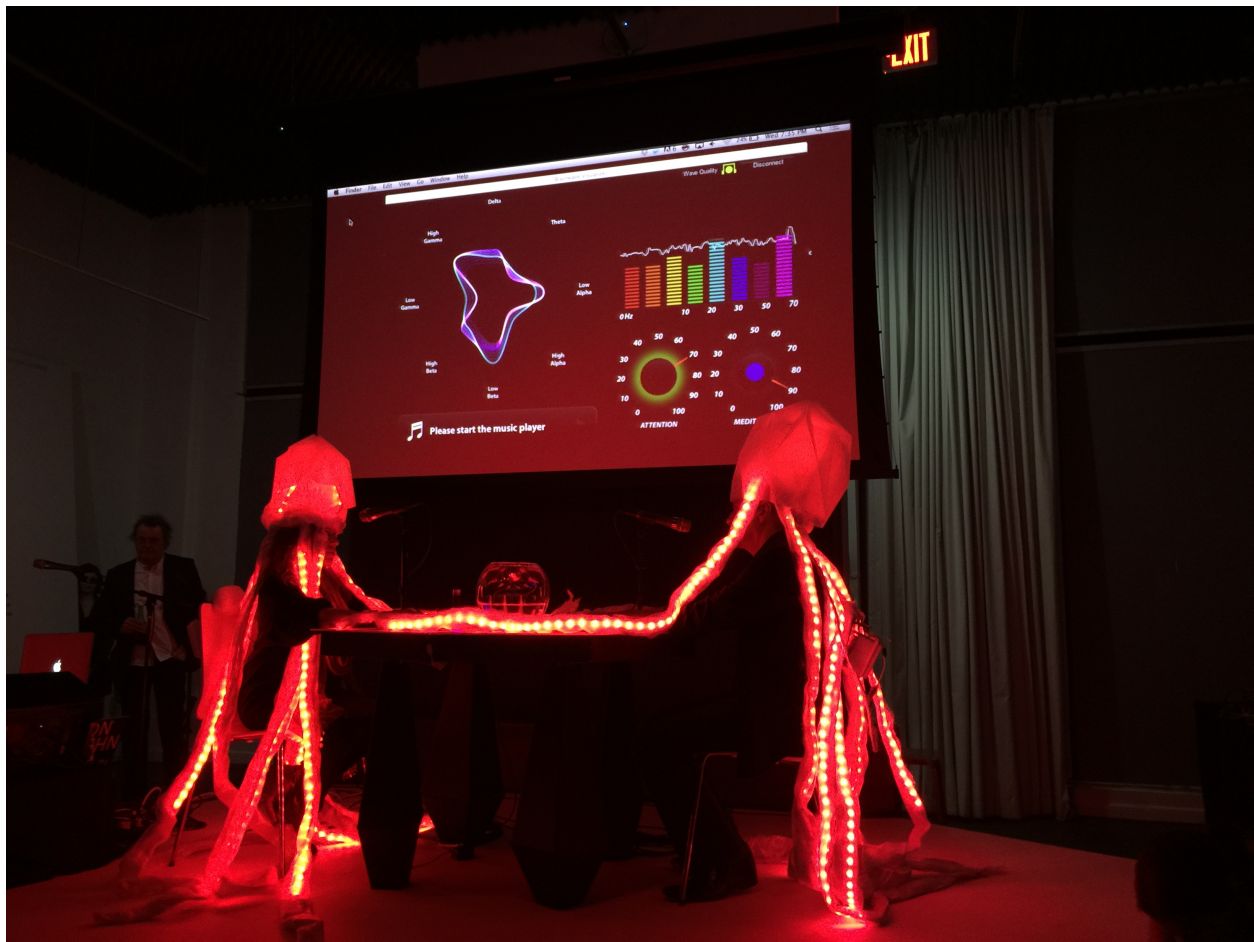
OCTOPUS BRAIN STORMING: *Empathy* performance is a unique amalgam of audience participation and viewing, neuroscience and emotions investigation, and artistic expression. The artist and scientist join forces to create a unique experience of live experiment as a performance engaging the public directly.

The project premiered in conceptual form at the Beall gallery of Art & Technology and then was performed as a preliminary public experiment at the SONOS studios in 2015. This upcoming performance at the Luskin center will be a premiere of a fully functional EEG version with a focus on sharing emotions and empathy.

The EEG sensor array will be embedded into color lit octopus crowns, giving the participants ceremonial presence while at the same time evoking the biological world of an octopus symbolizing embodied intelligence. The audience will have an opportunity to witness the power of non-verbal communication, sound and color in relation to our shared brain waves – in real time!

OCTOPUS BRAIN STORMING will utilize signal energy spanning the range from 8 to 12 Hz, the so-called “alpha” band. Following research on steady-state evoked EEG potentials performed in Dr. Cohen's lab, it is anticipated that the participants will be able to learn to shift the base frequencies of their own alpha rhythm to match the average.

For this iteration they were joined by Art Sci collective members Daniel Belquer (programming), Dan Wilkinson (data analytics), Cameron Rodriguez (technical advice) and media artists Mick Lorusso, Dawn Faelnar, Hsin Yu.



Victoria Vesna and Mark Cohen did an initial test of the concept at the Sonos studios gallery and this performance was enthusiastically accepted by the public and received a short write-up in *Insomniac*, a music review magazine, [“Live experiment Explores How Brainwaves React to Music and Color”](#).

Specially commissioned audio recordings, made by jazz artist, Kenton Chen, contain eight separate overlapping vocal recordings that are part of a single piece, like eight separate instruments in an octet. The brainwave synchronies control the mix of these audio tracks. Each of the audio tracks emanates from a different location in the room, giving increased spatial depth to the experience.

Dr. Victoria Vesna is Professor in the department of Design Media Arts and Director of the Art Sci center. She is visiting Professor at the Empowerment Informatics Program at the University of Tsukuba, Japan and Interface Cultures, University of Art, Linz, Austria.

Dr. Cohen is a neuroscientist and early pioneer of magnetic resonance imaging. He is Professor-in-Residence in the departments of Psychiatry, Neurology, Radiology, Biomedical Physics, Psychology and Bioengineering. He is also a musician.

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Contact:

Mick Lorusso, (626)497-3656 / mlorusso@ucla.edu

ARTSCI.UCLA.EDU ||||| IN COLLABORATION WITH UCLA DESIGN|MEDIA ARTS AND CALIFORNIA NANOSYSTEMS INSTITUTE
BROAD ART CENTER SUITE 5250, CHARLES E. YOUNG DRIVE, LOS ANGELES CA 90095 |||||||||||||||||||| 310 794 2118