SEE THE SOUND

TRUNG BAO NGUYEN

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ARTIST STATEMENT

Trung Bao is a multi-disciplinary artist specializing in voice, vocal percussion, performance and
visual technology and he goes with the title of a beatboxer and a visual artist. He has the ability to speak music and is
constantly exploring and pushing boundaries of the Beatbox artform. Trung has been pursuing the professional beatbox
career for over five years and have achieved many awards on international stages, made him one of the most influen-
cial beatboxers worldwide. Alongside his beatbox career, Trung has been studying graphic design and visual technology.
Trung Bao's biggest goal at the moment is to combine his two professions - music and visual art to elevate the experienc-
es at beatbox music festival through innovative audio-interactive visual.

THESIS PROPOSAL

I have always been fascinated by the world of sound and image. We perceive the world and shape our realities through our five senses, but mainly through hearing and seeing. I analyze the audio and visual information that I receive on the daily basis to learn about the world around me, I imitate the information that strikes me, combine and modify them and to learn about myself through creating the new reality that reflects how my brain works, consciously and subconsciously.

I want you to see the sound I create, to welcome you into my reality. My name is Trung Bao, I'm a multi-disciplinary artist specializing in voice, vocal percussion, performance, and visual technology. In short, I'm a beatboxer and a visual artist. I have attained the ability to speak music and I am exploring and pushing the boundary of this new art form called Beatbox. The special thing about beatbox is its instantaneity. I have the ability to imitate, design sounds and compose them together to create a piece of music anywhere, at any time without any equipment. The human aspect will be the main theme of my project.

I believe that sound and image are the two main elements that can connect people together. "You can't say exactly what a piece of music said to you without lyrics, but it definitely makes you feel something." - Reeps One. I have been saving music I like and music that speaks to me at a certain moment in my life since I was eight and I started to realize the impacts of music on my life. I realized its power of stimulating and recalling experiences and emotions. I always beatbox the music that speaks to me and this process help me express my emotion in the way no words can't describe. Expressing my mind through music also sometimes stimulate new emotions by creating new experiences or experiencing the moment that I'm in. It's a feedback loop that constantly happens inside my head anytime I play music. Through music, I can express and somewhat control my emotions. And with beatbox, this happens to me at all time. The more I explore the world of beatbox; the more I start to notice the rhythms of the world surround me, not only in the musical sense but also in a visual sense. I also started to grow a fascination for light and texture during the process of studying 3D design and sound design. If you zoom in a physical material or look at the physical wave or digital wave of a sound, you can see

the rhythms displayed in very high frequencies. And even colors are light waves traveling through space at specific frequencies, time and combination. I started to have a visual representation in my mind of every sound I hear and create. I now see the sounds. All these rhythms of audio and visual information affect how we feel and eventually how we see the world. I believe that if we can direct how one feels through the creation and modification of sound and image, we can connect the minds of different individuals together. And that is the purpose of my project, I want to show you how my mind works, how I feel through my music and how I visualize it.

Music visualization in the contemporary setting can be found in a live music concerts where the visual is either pre-rendered graphics controlled by VJs or live visual driven mainly by the MIDI input from the music with a minimal amount of spontaneous interaction between the performer with the visual and music at the same time. In beatbox, no two sounds are the same because of the organic quality of the art form. Beatbox is from human's breaths, it's created by the same body part we use to communicate. A performance performed at a different time can never be the same because of the human imperfection, which is what makes it special. In this case, pre-rendered graphics would not match. There's no MIDI output from the sounds I create, the computer won't be able to recognize sounds as linear as if there is. I will look into somehow to visualize sounds more spontaneously.

To visualize music coming from the human body, what's better to use visual that comes from the same source? In my opinion, the purest way to visualize beatbox is body movement. I have been performing beatbox around the world for the last four years. I started to notice how much I move during my performance. There are certain footwork, hand sign, facial expression and body movement that I do for each every single sound and routine that I perform. These movements were shaped naturally through my personal experience and subconscious emotions I have with the sounds and beats. There was mostly no conscious plan made by me. Studying other beatboxers' performance, I realize how everyone has their own set of body movements alongside with their unique set of sounds and combination of sounds. Be-

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sides the music they play, their body movements are what create "style" in beatbox. It fascinates me how in this case, the bridge between the world of sound and image is the human body. This has been shown in the dance culture. We dance to music to express our feelings without words, much similar to why beatboxers beatbox. The difference between me and a dancer is that I am also the music. My body movements are produced at the same time my music is produced. A dancer moves his/her body in reaction to external physical sound waves, but a beatboxer moves his/her body in reaction to the brain signals that tell his/her mouth to produce the sounds. The body, in this case, already knows what to do even before there is any sound.

My project will be a live beatbox and visual performance. I want to show you how I see the sound. In this case, body movement won't be enough since as an audience, you won't be able to experience the texture, speed and the contrast between the frequencies of sound visually. And here's where the role of technology come in play. I will use a microphone to perform with the output of the sound being amplified by a sound system but at the same time, the audio input signal will be transferred to my computer alongside with the video input of my body movements from a camera. This audio signal will be filtered, analyzed based on different sound quality such as frequency, tempo, volume,... and translated to data that can affect different parameters of the visual signal with the software TouchDesigner. I will program TouchDesigner to produce an abstract 3D shape which has patterned texture and it will be lit by digital light. High-frequency sounds will be equivalent to the high density of the pattern and sharper 3D shapes, low-frequency sounds will be equivalent to more organic and rounded shape with lower density in the pattern. The digital light will have the flicker frequency driven by the tempo of the beat. These graphics will be composited on top of the video input of my body movements. The software will also emit particles from the data of body movements through a Kinect. All of these modified visual inputs will be projected in the space that is visible to the viewer alongside my physical appearance in real-time. So for the project, besides composing a musical performance, I will need to create a program inside of TouchDesigner to achieve the visual

I desire and finally perform it. I believe if the program is successfully built, it will be an exciting future for live music performance. It puts the focus on the human rather than the computer. The computer is merely an amplifier of the human's performance. For the oral defense, I will present a WIP version of the software with basic sound interaction, I will share my computer screen and explain briefly how TouchDesigner works particularly in my project and do a small beatbox performance. I will also present a few slides of mood board, some animation clips that I created in the theme of beatbox and music interaction.

My influences are Harry Yeff aka Reeps One who is a pioneer in the beatbox community. He often talks about beatbox in term of music, language and technology. My second inspiration is Chris Cunningham who is an influential director. He directs a lot of music video and often time the music affect the motions of the characters, object or light. My other inspiration is Joel Thomas Zimmerman aka Deadmau5, who is constantly pushing technology in creating music and visual, he really sees the complementary between the world of music and visual and he is very knowledgable about both.

I have knowledge in 3D graphic and time-based motion graphic. My visual style of work is influenced heavily by complexity with bright colors and gradients. Light and material play a big role in creating this complexity. There is never an element that stays still or has only plain color in my works. In my 3D works, I pay extra attention to creating bumps, scratches, smudges,... on the surface. This complexity is inspired by the physical world and its imperfection. This vision will fit well with my musical practice which is rather organic than digitally perfect.

Besides all the technical aspects, the project is self-expressive, I want you to see the world of music as I vision it. You will learn a bit about me, I will learn more about myself in the process of making. Besides showing you how my brain works, I hope to create unique experiences, emotions, and spark inspiration for you.

ABSTRACT

See The Sound is a project exploring the worlds of sound and image and bridging between the two. Growing up with synesthesia, I developed a love for visual art and music. I started a ten years beatbox career when I was twelves through watching a beatbox performance by the beatbox legend Rahzel on Youtube. With the ability to imitate & design sounds with my mouth and compose music anywhere, at anytime without any equipment of a beatboxer, I started to notice the rhythm and texture of the world around me. See The Sound is an interactive Audio-Visual performance where I invite you to see the sound I create, explore the sound of beatbox. I break down music into three main elements - melody, repetition, texture and pair them to three visual principles - color, pattern, texture. I utilize the interactive and generative power of the software Touchdesigner to produce live visual for a piece of music I compose. I went through an interesting process during the making of the project. It was a big learning process working with not only concept, art directing but also as a musician and technician.

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We perceive the world and shape our realities through our five senses, but I believe mainly through hearing and seeing. I have always been fascinated by the world of sound and image. I subconsciously analyze the audio and visual information that I receive on a daily basis to learn about the world around me. I find a way to imitate the information that strikes me, combine and modify them to learn about myself through creating the new reality that reflects how my brain works, consciously and subconsciously. I'm a multi-disciplinary artist specializing in voice, vocal percussion, performance, and visual technology. In short, I'm a beatboxer and a visual artist. I have attained the ability to speak music and I am exploring and pushing the boundaries of this new art form called Beatbox. See The Sound is an Audio-Visual performance where I invite you to see the sound I create, explore the sound of beatbox, to welcome you into my reality. So where does beatbox come from?

In the late 1880s, black jazz groups (usually quartets) in America would sing acapella, that is, using their harmonized voices to make music. They would hold long, low notes that resemble a lot of quality of modern beatboxing bass sounds. Beside this, vocal percussion was used by these quartets to help their music keep time, such as clicks of tongue and taking sharp breathe in. One of the most revolutionary sounds in modern beatboxing is the K snare that was popularized by the legendary beatboxer Kenny Muhammad, but little did everyone knows, the black American musicians have been doing it more than a hundred years before the sound became mainstream. Blues and Jazz eventually motivated musicians to imitate more musical sounds, such as the 'shh-chh' of a soft snare and the 'tsss' of the hi-hat being played with brushes. Blues groups found a way to make their music with nothing but their voices. As blues became more and more mainstream, scatting and bass humming became well known. Higher range singers would wail long, joined notes, taking place in trumpet in solos. Immediately, this form of vocal percussion became a staple of urban culture, that is, the culture of the street. Poor artists would roam the streets, or gather on street corners, imitating trumpets and saxophones outside the jazz halls. Mouth music had been practices by black musicians for decades until the 1980s, when the three kings of vocal percussion entered the mainstream media. They are Darren 'Buffy' Robinson from The Fat Boys, Doug E Fresh and Biz

Markie. During this time drum machines became essential in the hip hop community, particularly the Roland TR-808. Beatboxers started to imitate the sounds of this machine, and the range of sounds that can be imitated with the mouth during this time expanded. In the 1980s, Doug E. Fresh claims that he coined the term "human beatbox." With many appearances on mainstream records, Doug E Fresh, The Fat Boys and Biz Markie helped engrain beatbox the mind of the public as a unique artform. Following up with the three kings in the 1980s is Rahzel who brought beatbox to a whole new level with his electronic sounds. Rahzel became the most established beatbox icon in the hip hop and pop culture to this day. In the 2000s, internet became more popular than ever, which brought the light to beatbox internationally. Beatbox became more accessible with all the resources, forum, and instructions that are free online.

Without internet, a 12 year old middle school kid from Hanoi, Vietnam in 2009 would never had imagined that he would watch one of the most amazing human performances that he had ever seen. The performance was by Rahzel at Red Bull BC One in 2005 that someone ripped off an old DVD and posted it on Youtube. In the video, there was only one performer on stage which was Rahzel, and one microphone. He composed and performed all the drum, bass, vocal,... on the spot while interacting with the crowd. It blew the kid's mind so much that he started his whole 10 years beatbox career from his tiny bedroom in his third-world country. And that kid is me.

The journey of training and becoming a professional beatboxer is amazing. With the popularization of the artform and the development of beatbox culture itself, I have been attending beatbox events, participating or judging competitions and performing around the world for the last 5 years. I ended up meeting all the people I watch and look up to on the internet. I recently participated in the world beatbox championship in Switzerland and judged the American beatbox championship in New York city and I met Rahzel twice at both events. It has come full circle.

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Contrary to common belief, beatboxing remains to be a rapidly growing art form that transcends the sole replication of drums and sound effects and into full musical performances. Modern beatboxing has acquired a solid definition as the musical expression of the body through the innovation of sounds and the crafting of music by only using the mouth, throat, and nose. Beatboxing is a primal human art form that utilizes the physical body as a versatile instrument. Musical expression through the body stands at the core of human communication, making beatboxing the most organic art form. To me, the most special thing about beatbox is its instantaneity. I have the ability to imitate, design sounds and compose them together to create a piece of music anywhere, at any time without any equipment. Beatbox is also very diverse, people from different backgrounds around the world develop a wide range of styles, sets of sounds based on their language. With this diversity in expressive ability, beatbox is no longer tied to hip hop culture exclusively, you can find beatboxers that perform any genre of music with the max capability in producing melodies, different types of rhythm in wide range of tempos, plus the sounds that people are able to produce nowadays is so refined and intricate.

Beatbox community is an untapped market, it has been growing exponentially in the last few years. In 2019, beatbox content is mostly consumed through internet and social media while youtube acting as the main platform to showcase this growing artform. It's where people post beatbox performances and live beatbox competitions. Despite all the growth, I find beatbox performances lacking care in live-show experiences.

Since a young age, I have always loved visual art and drawing. My father is a painter. I learned drawing from him back in Vietnam. When I decided to go to college, my reason for going into graphic design was simply because I drew a lot and I knew some Adobe software. But going to the world of Graphic Design, I realized there's so much more to it than just drawing pretty images. Graphic Design is the way of directing people's psychology through visual principles and I'm fascinated by this. Principles such as colors, repetition, contrast, hierarchy,... all play important roles in designing the viewing experience for the viewer. As a designer, you can lead the eye of the viewers, direct them how or when to see

certain messages. You can go into the viewers' psychology simply through placing down graphic elements. In the early 20th century, the art movement Futurism was started in Italy. Despite all the violence, aggressive fascist ideology, Futurist artists came up with an interesting idea of using typography to express the sound of industrialism. By placing down lines of texts or simply letters in different patterns, size, fonts and weight, Futurists typography artworks successfully express to the viewer the sense of noisy vehicles, factories of the industrial era. I find it interesting how by simply using visual language, you can evoke different senses and emotions for the viewer and to me, that is powerful. But the futurists made the musician side of me ask myself a question "if visual can evoke the sense of sound, can sound gives the same effect to visual?"

I have always had a vision of sounds. I see the sound I hear or create in my head. Every sound comes in in the form of colors, shapes or textures. I notice some of the visual I have with the sound are based on the first experience or the strongest impression I had with it, but some are quite arbitrary. I didn't realize it was something personal until I noticed that it was not common for people around me. I started to do some research and I found out about the phenomenon called Synesthesia. Synesthesia is a perceptual phenomenon in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to automatic, involuntary experiences in a second sensory or cognitive pathway. The experiences of people who have Synesthesia (synesthetes) actually varies from person to person. There are many types of Synesthesia along with different connections between different senses, but one of the most common types of Synesthesia is the association of sounds with colors. For some, everyday sounds such as doors opening, cars honking, or people talking can trigger seeing colors. For others, colors are triggered when musical notes or keys are being played. I personally have a lot of experience of associating pitch with colors and it often triggers a strong sense, I sometimes see a field of color or gradient when a piece of music is playing. This phenomenon is referred to as photisms. If a musical note is a color, a combinations of notes (or chords) works just like a combination of colors. Sometimes when I hear a certain chord, I see colors as blocks sitting next to each other, or I see them blending to each other and make a gradient-like effects. But I experience music not only through melody, and color is not the only thing I see when I hear music.

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The second phenomenon I usually encounter is hearing rhythm texture when I see. Since I'm a beatboxer with the ability of producing music in real-time, I almost can hear and repeat a beat when I see any visual information, doesn't matter if it's a work of art, or merely a day to day object. Everything has rhythm, either from the placement of the parts in the object/composition, or the object's material, or the dynamic contrasts between the parts in sizes, hue, value,... And rhythm, when is played in high density, will create texture. When a sequence of sounds or shapes is played or displayed in high density, our mind recognizes them as one unit and this unit cary a texture based on its core rhythm. We subconsciously have different feelings with different texture because of this. All of these elements create rhythm and inform how I experience the visual world around me. All of these elements create rhythm and inform how I experience the visual world around me. This phenomenon creates a feedback look in my life, not only did I hear the rhythm of the visual world around me, I also started to see the world of sound. When I hear music, I see shapes, pattern coming to my mind, sometimes I see material according to the sounds I hear, or sometimes I even associate sounds and beats with a whole objects with different parts and multiple texture. Sometimes I see a real-life object, but sometime it's unidentifiable even with its complex set of rhythms and textures.

In my head, the visual language and audio language are very separate, but they constantly communicate with each other and try to make sense of the information that comes in. This influences heavily the way I create. When I make visual art or music, I'm always mindful about the feel of what I put down, either that's the individual element, the combination of elements or the composition of the whole piece, both in terms of composition of elements in a frame or pacing composition of elements or sequences in time-based works like animation and music. Every element I put down is meant to direct the eyes and the ears of the audience and evoke emotions. To be able to execute this successfully, I use the most important principle I learned from graphic design - contrast. The core concept of contrast is the juxtaposition of multiple elements with opposite or different feelings. It takes many forms. In a still image, contrast can be shown through the combination of different colors, value, form, size, texture,... In a moving image, contrast can be shown through the pacing of different speeds, directions, repetition of actions,... And in sound, contrast can be shown also through texture,

speeds but also through the movement of sound in space, volume, pitch and the repetition of sounds. One element that is universal to all medium is the lack of elements. In graphic design, we use negative space. It's the space between the elements we put down in a design and it's used to draw attention to those elements. And in music, we use silence, for a similar purpose.

The process of stimulating sound through visual and vice versa creates experiences to me. I notice that most people can hear and see the world, but it's not as common for a mind to put both audio and visual information together naturally, or different people will have different range of how much their mind will stimulate different senses when they receive an information. To me, experiencing something through many senses and processing all of them at the same time is an interesting ability which I really enjoy. It happens in my mind quite strongly at all times. It helps me to take a step back and look at the song I'm writing visually or to feel a visual work musically. It's a fresh view on what I might be stuck working on for a long time, and I would be able to figure out what to add or to remove. Through this project, I hope to share this audio visual stimulation experience with the viewers. I want to show people how I see the sounds.

I study graphic design and I have acquired over the years the knowledge in 3D graphic and time-based motion graphic. When I go to a beatbox event, I pay close attention to not only the sounds being produced but also the whole experience of being there. I notice that these events have never considered visuals as an important aspect of the performance. All the biggest beatbox-centered events around have always had only a backdrop with a low-effort lighting on stage. The music that people are producing at these events are beyond imagination, and the visual is not doing it justice. I believe visual is the next step for these events that will elevate the live experience to another level for everyone there, both the performers and the audience. In my thesis project, I want to explore live visual that represents the sound of beatbox and also reflects the organic performance quality of the artform. I have been known in the beatbox community as the most prolific visual artist of the scene. Plus, since I'm an established beatboxer in the community, I have the credibility that no one has to produce visual for the scene. I have been working closely with the biggest beatbox events

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organizers in the world (namingly Grand Beatbox Battle, SBX Camp, Swissbeatbox) I want to bring this project to perform live at those events and elevate the visual quality of the beatbox scene.

Music visualization in the contemporary setting can be found in a live music concerts where the visual is either pre-rendered graphics controlled by VJs (visual jockey/visual DJs) or live visual driven mainly by the MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) or as known as digital input from the music with a minimal amount of spontaneous interaction between the performer with the visual and music at the same time. In beatbox, no two sounds are the same because of the organic quality of the art form. Beatbox is from human's breaths, it's created by the same body part we use to communicate. One beatbox performance can never be the same as another because of human imperfection, which is what makes it special. In this case, pre-rendered graphics would not match. There's no MIDI output from the sounds I create, the computer won't be able to recognize sounds as linear as if there is.

To visualize the organic music that I produce, I decided to use Touchdesigner as my main medium. For the performance, I will use a microphone to perform with the output of the sound being amplified by a sound system but at the same time, the audio input signal will be transferred to Touchdesigner on my computer. The software allows me to generate graphics and also map the sound I produce to any parameter of the graphic. Through this method, the visual will never stay the same, it will interact organically with the music I produce in real time. In this project, humans is the main focus and the human body is what drives the technology to mutually create an experience for the audience.

I decided to break the project down to three sections. The idea is to show the three different ways of interpreting music - melody, rhythm and texture. I made a plan to compose a full music performance that includes three distinctive parts representing these three parts, then I would pair them with the three sections of visuals that go along with them. I decided to pair melody with color, rhythm with repetition/patterns, and audio texture with visual texture. I believe the pairings of these audio and visual principles don't only apply to me, but universally as well. Rhythm pairing with repetition is self

explanatory, this section focuses on the sequence of sounds. For texture, I want to focus on the quality of individual sounds and how they are placed next to each other. Creating the contrast between the sharp and rounded sounds would evoke the sense of texture, and this translates to visual clearly with the contrast of forms, with the differences between angular and rounded shapes, the density of a pattern or the changing of the shape's proportion. For melody, the initial decision to pair it with color was my synesthesia. But if we break it down scientifically, melody is the sequencing of pitches, and this basically means the changes of sound frequencies. We perceive color in a very similar manner. Colors are light frequencies. I find it interesting how a certain sound frequency or light frequency will give us a specific feeling. The combination of different music notes (a melody/chord) or the combination of multiple colors, either sitting next to each other, or blending together, evoke emotions.

I have a vision of how the parts look like. As I normally approach a graphic design project, I focus on two main aspect - concept and art direction. For this project, the concept was clear from the beginning, and I had a vision of what it would look like, but I did not expect how much different it was to not only art direct to project, but also be the music composer and the technician at the same time. Since the main concept is to produce visual that change organically overtime to reflect the essence of a beatbox performance, it's not as simple as producing animation traditionally, where the frames are locked on a strict timeline. I came up with the solution of designing each element on a frame separately and having them move in different manners, and when put together as layers, they create a unified frame. So my first step was to sketch out a few key frames according to each section. When I started to build those frame digitally, I initially wanted to work only in the world of Touchdesigner because the software has the ability to produce generative graphics. I ran into some problems. The software is made for real-time visuals, it cannot handle some of the more heavy detailed graphics. I came up with some more stylized graphics that could run smoothly in Touchdesigner and though some were looking good, I had a problem with how things move. At this point, I was very excited about trying out the possibility of the software. I tried to map different sound parameters like volume, frequencies, speed on to a lot of different visual parameters at the same time. This resulted in some very chaotic motions. And because of this, the interaction became unclear

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to the eyes. I decided to go back into the software to narrow the list of influenced visual parameters. I learned that the parameters that show in interaction the clearest are time/speed, hue, value and form. I successfully built the first demo of an audio interactive visual performance, but I realized that it was too simple and somewhat repetitive in terms of how the frame look. It was changing accordingly to my voice but it wasn't interactive enough to show the clear difference between the three sections that I had. I came to the conclusion that it was impossible to change the graphic drastically by only using my voice. I decided to bring in a MIDI controller. This MIDI controller is not used to trigger motions of the graphic but merely a tool to help me switch between different set of graphics accordingly to the three sections I have. The use of the MIDI controller in this project opened a new way of thinking about the interactive system, it brought in the possibility of producing more variety throughout the duration of the performance and I could bring in different keyframe ideas that I had for different sections and put them in sequence. At this point, it was much easier to build a long set of visual, but I had a problem with the relationship between sections. I assigned the buttons on the MIDI controller to turn on graphic for different parts, but the switch happened too sudden, and it didn't feel like these parts belong to a cohesive piece. It was a learning process breaking down the building block in the programming language in Touchdesigner to have power to morph between two different frames seamlessly. By doing this, I successfully built a full-length visual performance that organically and continuously change overtime while still maintaining the distinctive key visual for different sections.

While all of these technical breakthroughs were happening, I also had to write a beatbox performance. I started out made plans to write down all the music, make all the time block for different part before I go into making all the graphics. But I realized that by doing that, I was trying to imitate a machine, which contradicted the core concept of the project. No two sounds are the same in beatbox performance, but I also want to bring this quality to the music composition as well. I set a goal to create a music performance that, similarly to the visual, is different every time I perform but still maintain clear distinctions between the three sections. Inspired by my own process of brainstorming key visuals for each section, I

made a list of sounds that fits with the energy of each part. I practiced the different combinations of sounds in different tempo, rhythm and made a big list of small beatbox sequences that would fit each other no matter what. All I had to do at this point is to improvise the selections and perform them in real-time.

During the main performance, besides performing a beatbox improvisation, I will also need to control the MIDI controller simultaneously. During performance rehearsals, I realized that the interactive visual, even though has been designed at this point, produced some unexpected results when I made mistakes in pressing buttons due to multitasking. I pressed the wrong button or turned the wrong knobs and ended up triggering the graphics in different sequences than what I planned. But I realized this was a happy accident. I realized that the buttons and knobs are much similar to the small sequences and combinations of sounds that I practiced. There are groups of them that fit into a section, but those belong to the same group don't have to be played in the right order. I started to have a much more flexible visual performance. Now not only the elements that are different every time I perform, the pacing, sequencing or as I call it - time composition of the whole performance became much more spontaneous. With this idea in mind, when I perform, it became all about the feeling in the moment, the feelings direct how my mouth produce the sound and how my hand control the sequence of the visual. The project started out as a way for me to show people what sounds look like to me in terms of colors, patterns and textures, but now I have an extra element - the ability of controlling time and how things move with my momentary feelings.

This has been a great learning process for me. After thesis is over, I want to keep adding to this project and building more visual sets that have similar performative energy. I hope to one day bring this project to live-beatbox events and change the way people look at the beatbox event and beatbox culture.

CREATIVE BRIEF

See The Sound is a Audio-Visual performance where I invite you to see the sound I create, to welcome you into my reality. I'm a multi-disciplinary artist specializing in voice, vocal percussion, performance, and visual technology. In short, I'm a beatboxer and a visual artist. I have attained the ability to speak music and I am exploring and pushing the boundaries of this new art form called Beatbox. Beatboxing is the musical expression of the body through the innovation of sounds and the crafting of music by only using the mouth, throat, and nose. Contrary to common belief, beatboxing remains to be a rapidly growing art form that transcends the sole replication of drums and sound effects and into full musical performances. Beatboxing is a primal human art form that utilizes the physical body as a versatile instrument. Musical expression through the body stands at the core of human communication, making beatboxing the most organic art form. To me, the most special thing about beatbox is its instantaneity. I have the ability to imitate, design sounds and compose them together to create a piece of music anywhere, at any time without any equipment. I want to create live visual that also reflects this organic performance quality.
Beatbox community is an untapped market, it has been growing exponentially in the last few years. Though, beatbox events have never considered visuals as an important aspect of the performance. But to me, it is one of the key elements that can elevate the live experience to another level for the audience.

Music visualization in the contemporary setting can be found in a live music concerts where the visual is either pre-rendered graphics controlled by VJs (visual jockey/visual DJs) or live visual driven mainly by the MIDI input from the music with a minimal amount of spontaneous interaction between the performer with the visual and music at the same time. In beatbox, no two sounds are the same because of the organic quality of the art form. Beatbox is from human's breaths, it's created by the same body part we use to communicate. One beatbox performance can never be the same as another because of human imperfection, which is what makes it special. In this case, pre-rendered graphics would not match. There's no MIDI output from the sounds I create, the computer won't be able to recognize sounds as linear as if there is.

To visualize the organic music that I produce, I decided to use Touchdesigner as my main medium. For the performance, I will use a microphone to perform with the output of the sound being amplified by a sound system but at the same time, the audio input signal will be transferred to Touchdesigner on my computer. The software allows me to generate graphic and also map the sound I produce to any parameter of the graphic. Through this method, the visual will never stay the same, it will interact organically with the music I produce in real time. I will break down the performance into three sections reflecting the three ways of perceiving music - melody, rhythm and sound, and I will pair them with interactive graphic that focus on visual quality such as color, pattern and texture.
I have knowledge in 3D graphic and time-based motion graphic and I have been known in the beatbox community as the most prolific visual artist of the scene. Plus, since I'm an established beatboxer in the community, I have the credibility that no one has to produce visual for the scene. I have been working closely with the biggest beatbox events organizers in the world (namingly Grand Beatbox Battle, SBX Camp, Swissbeatbox) I want to bring this project to perform live at those events and elevate the visual quality of the beatbox scene. Beside beatbox, I can see this project has a very special place in live music performance in general, I will experiment with different types of artists and explore all the possibilities in music performance.
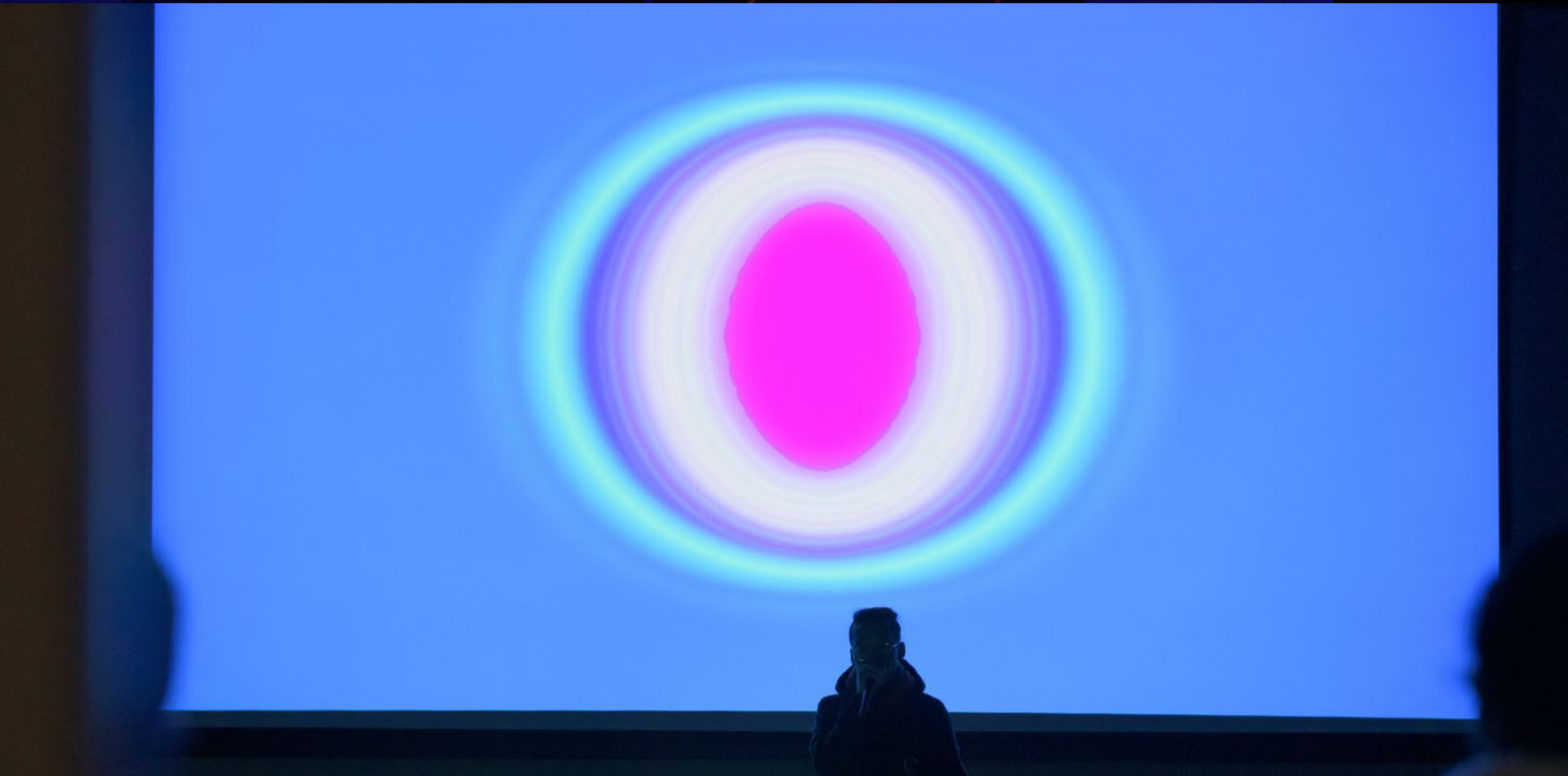
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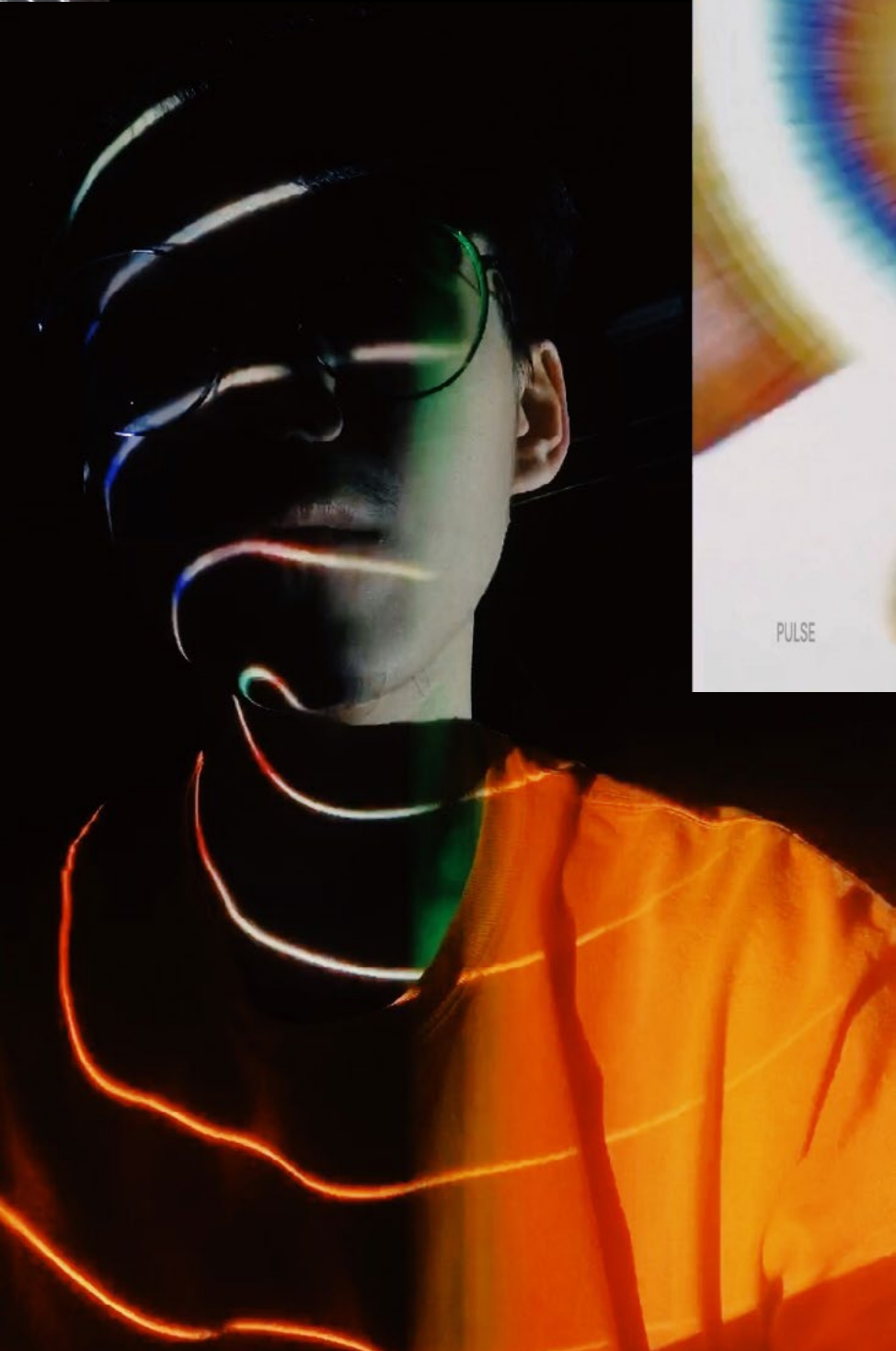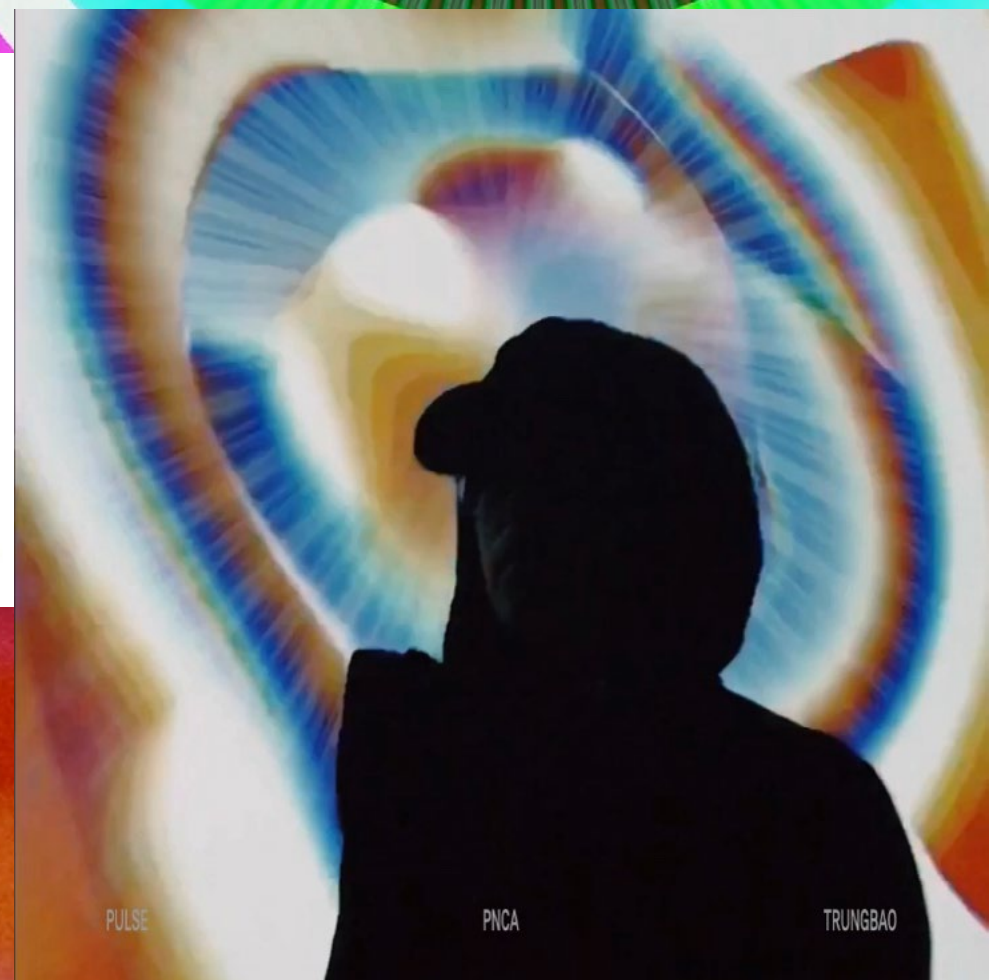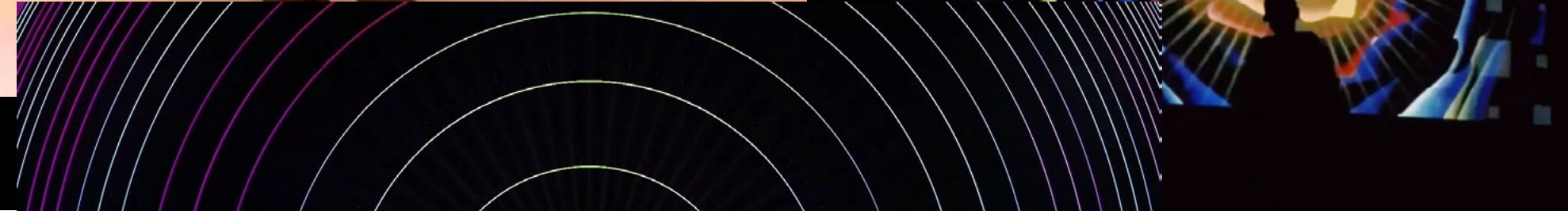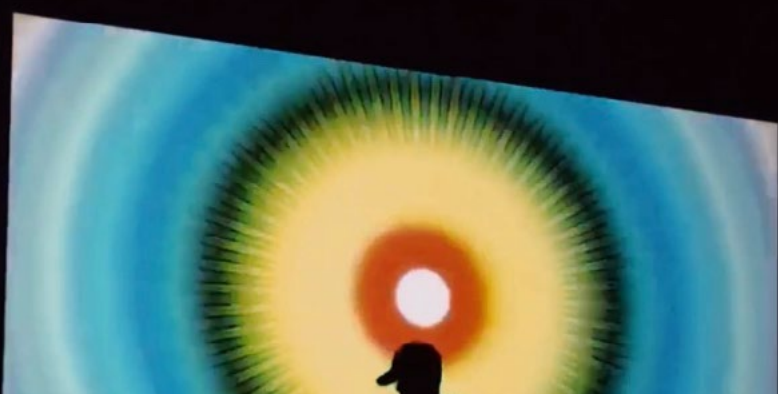
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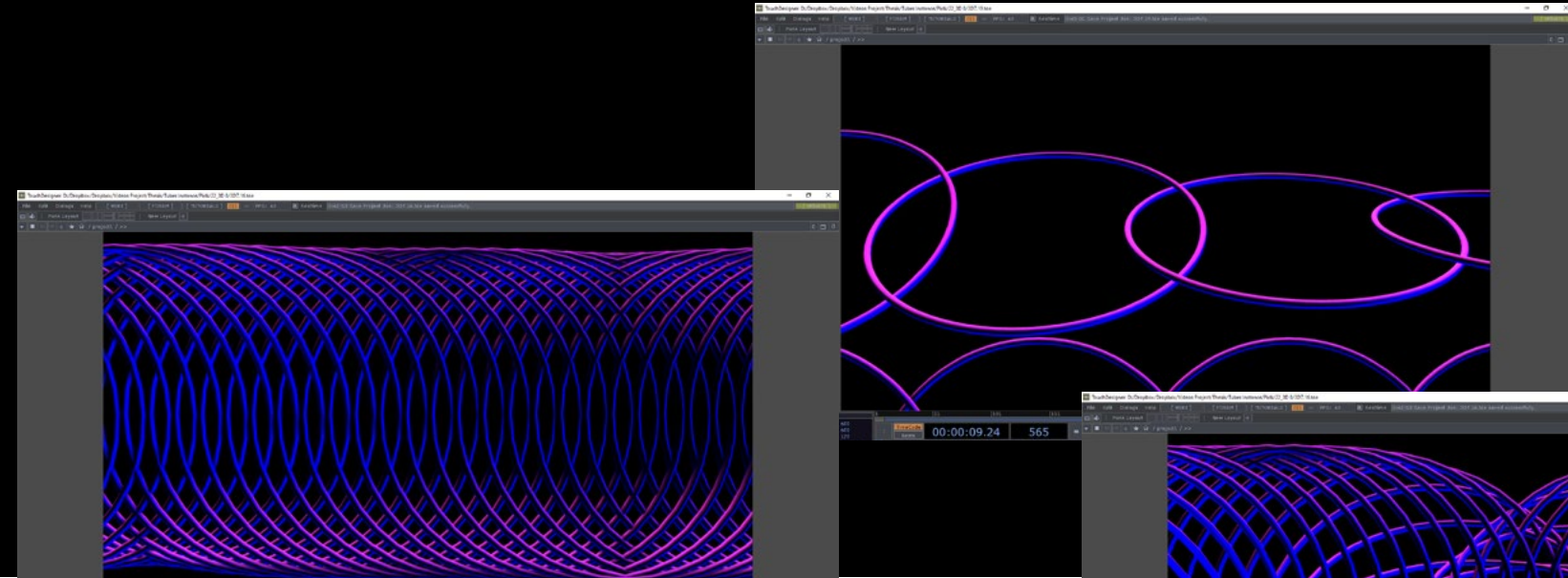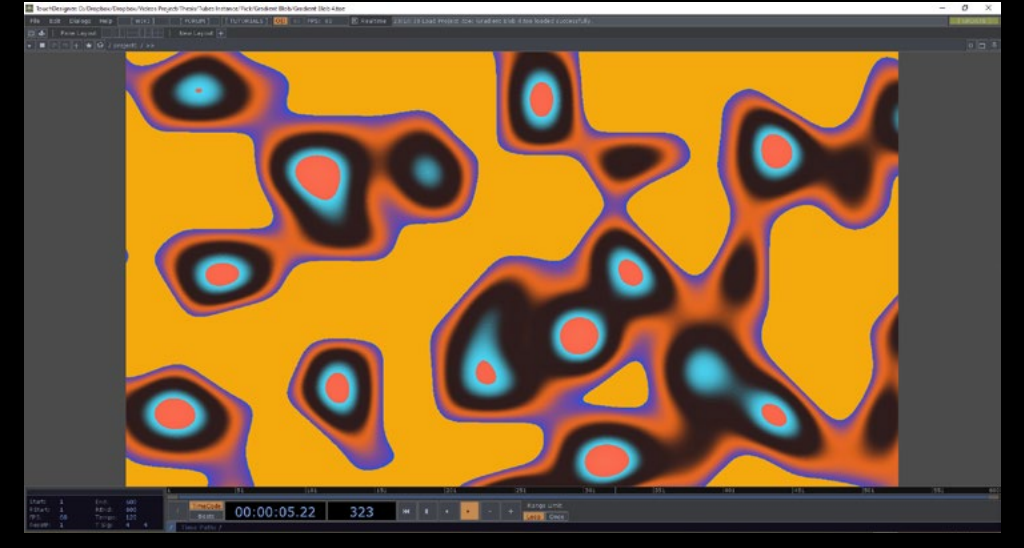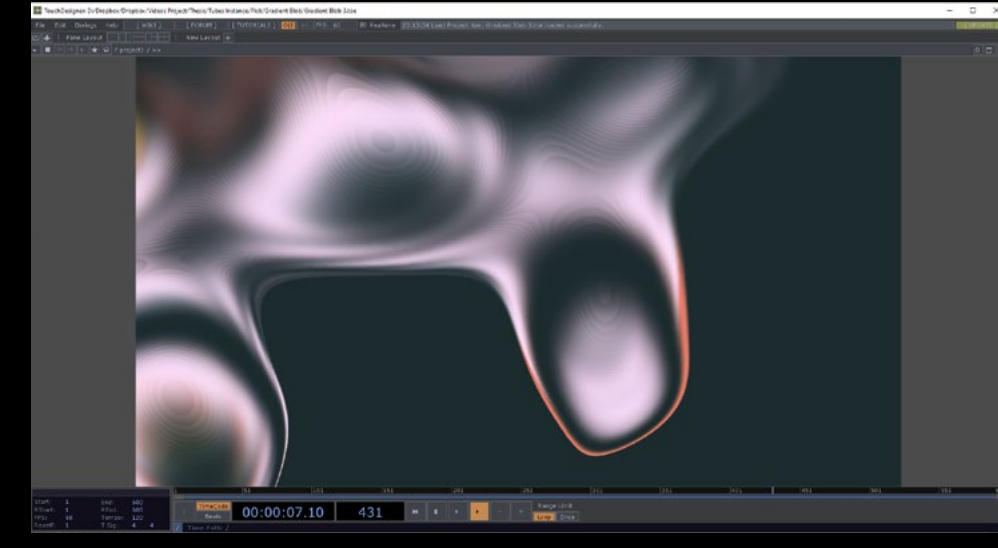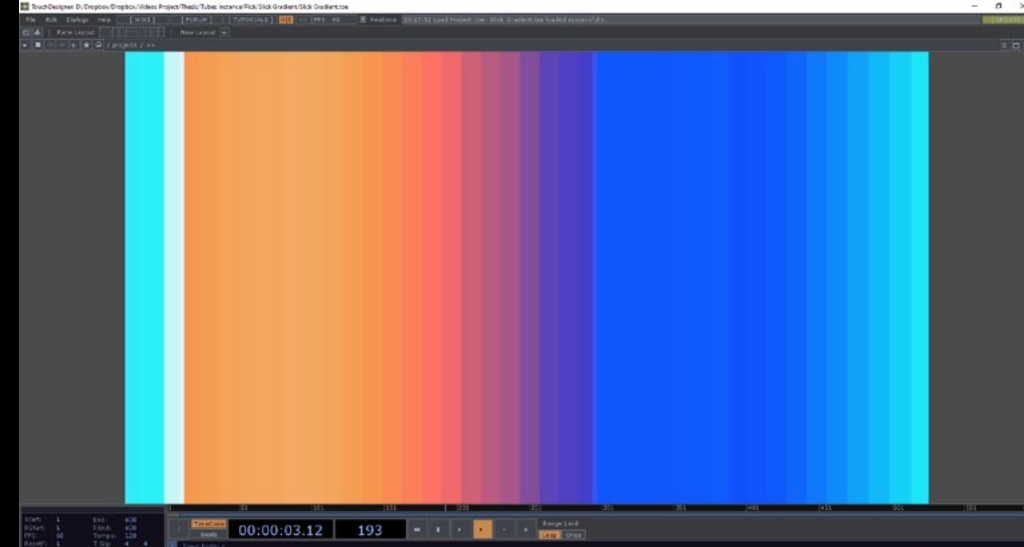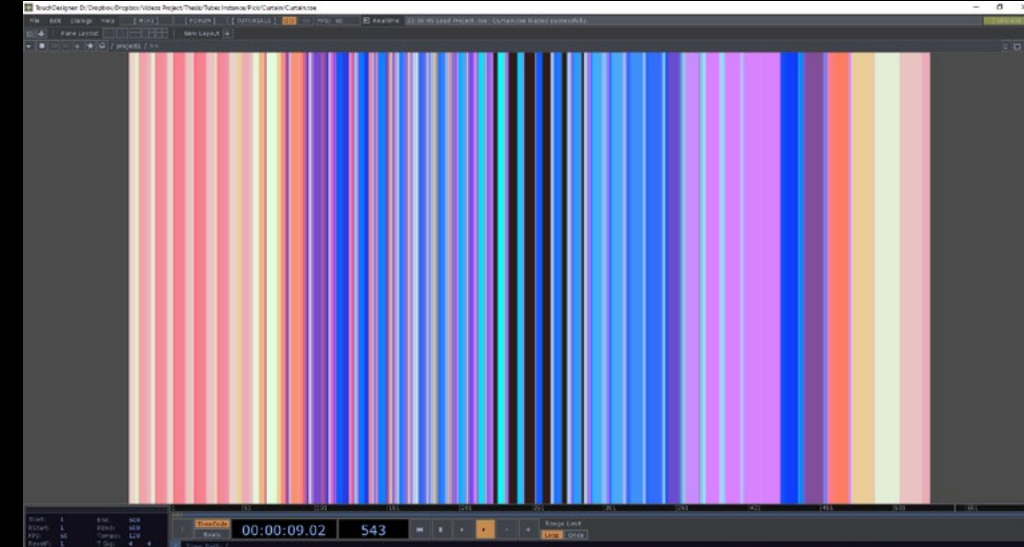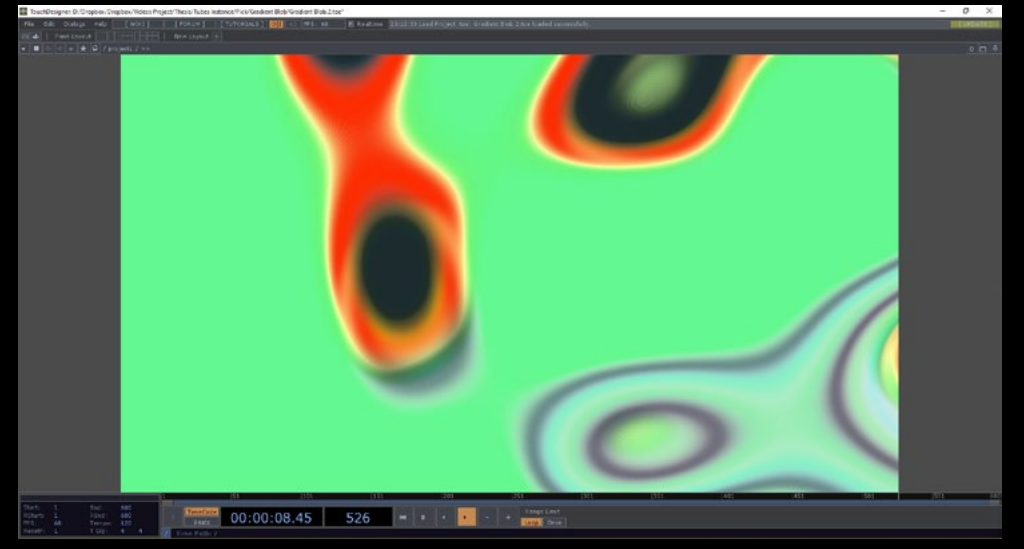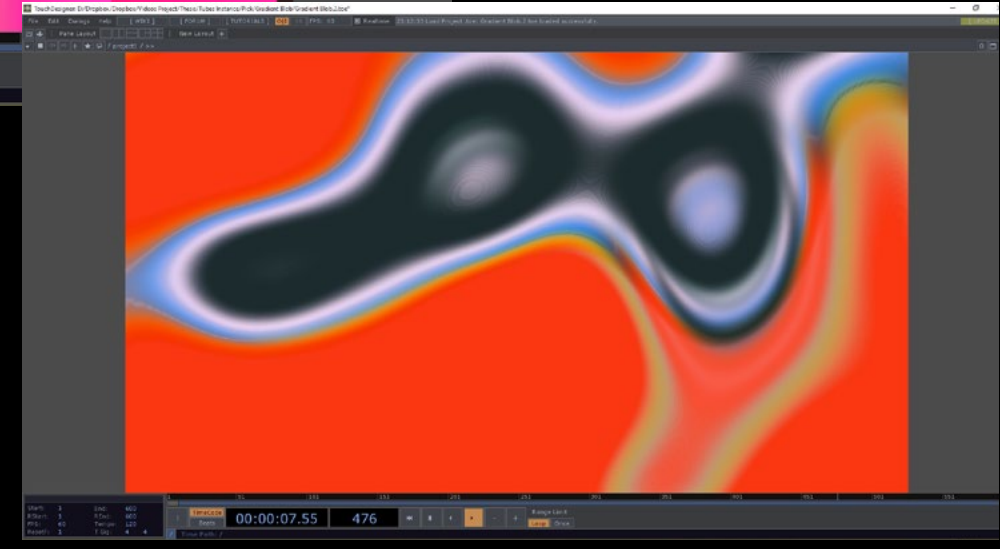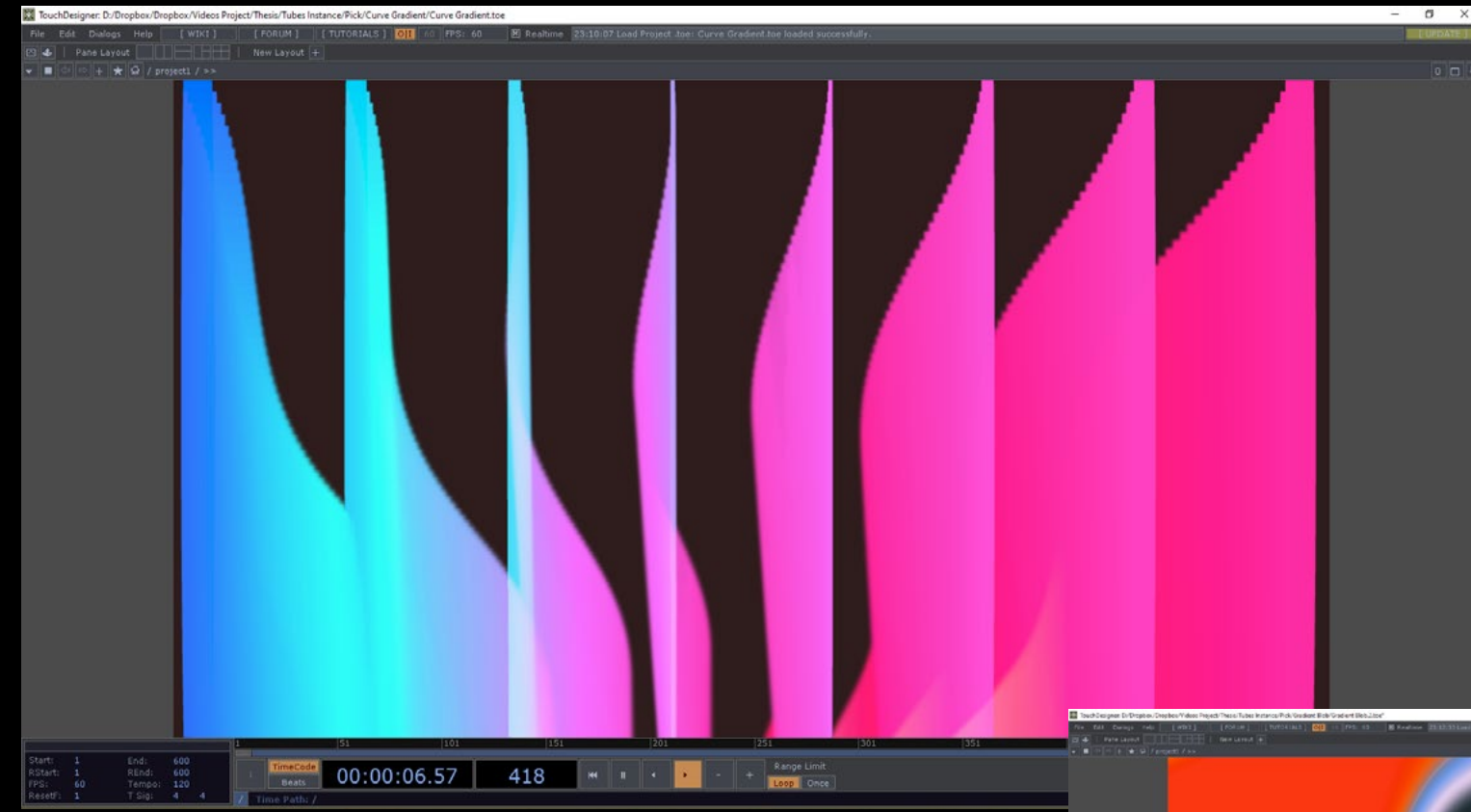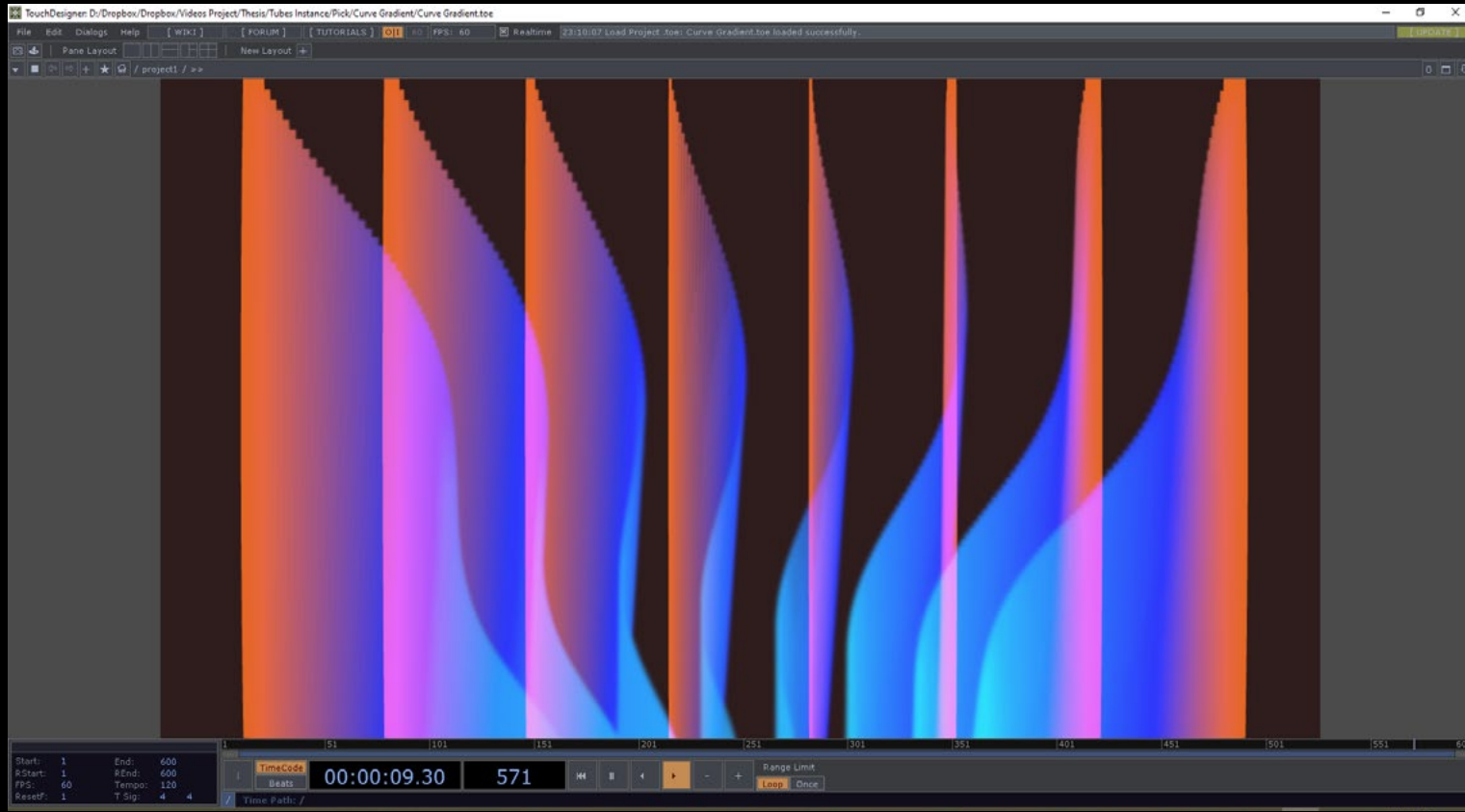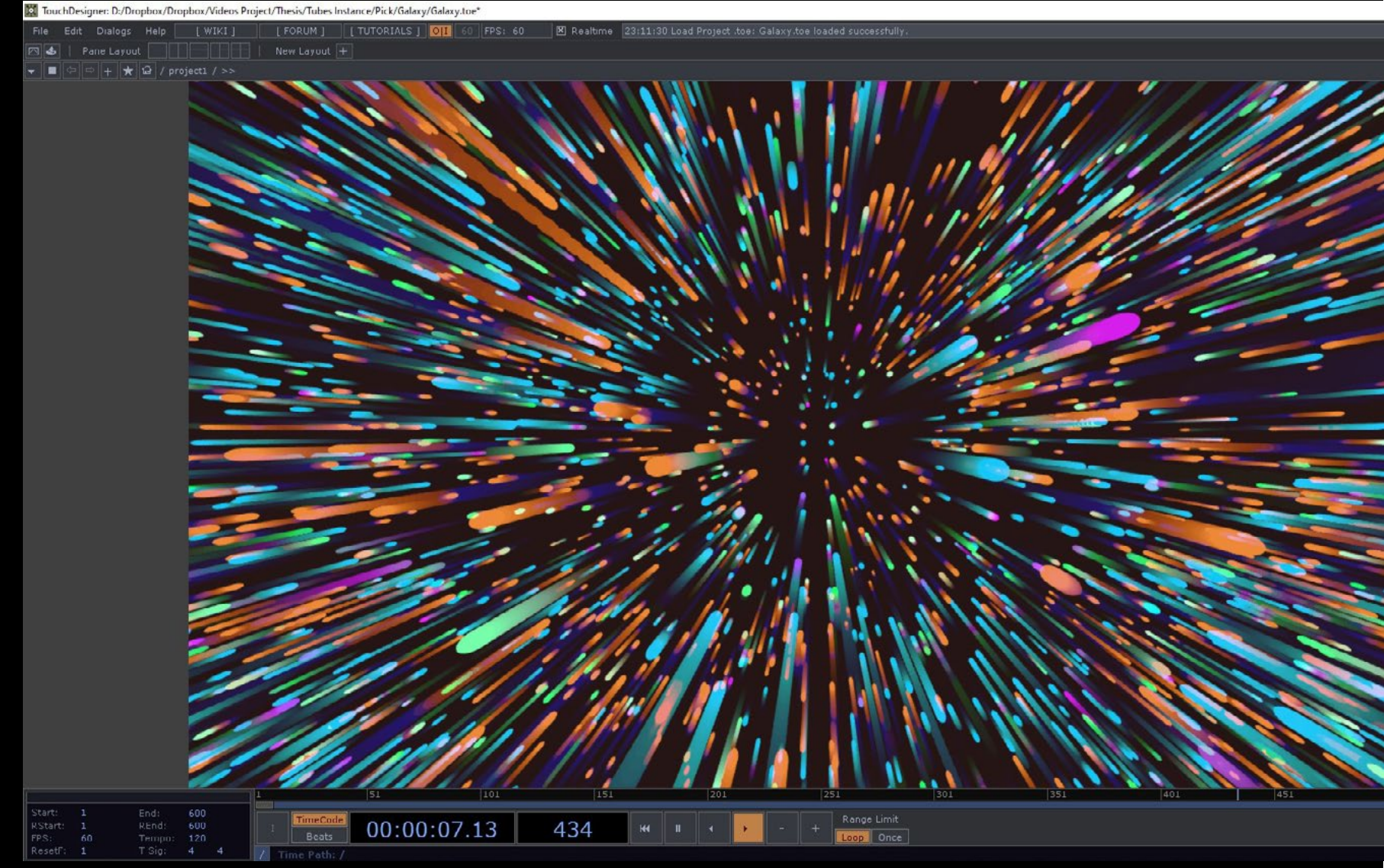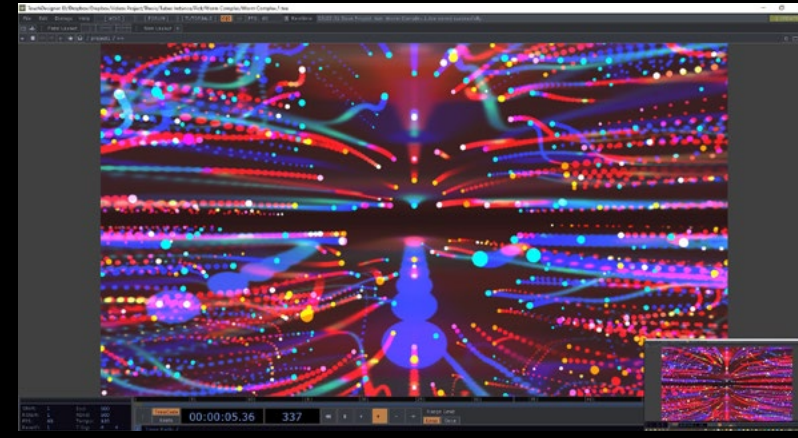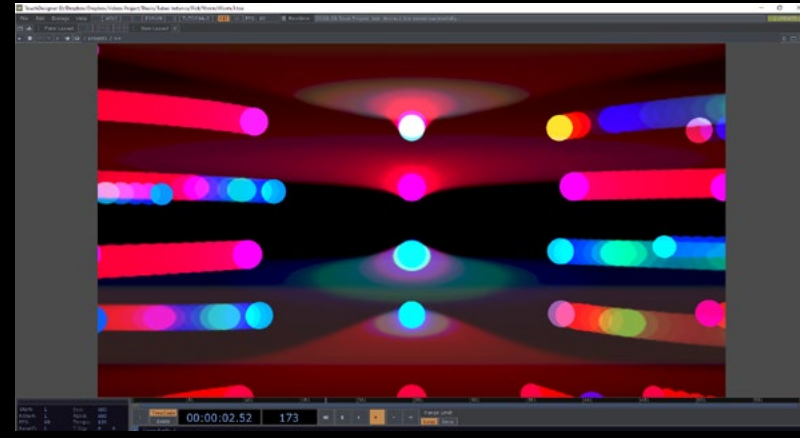
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