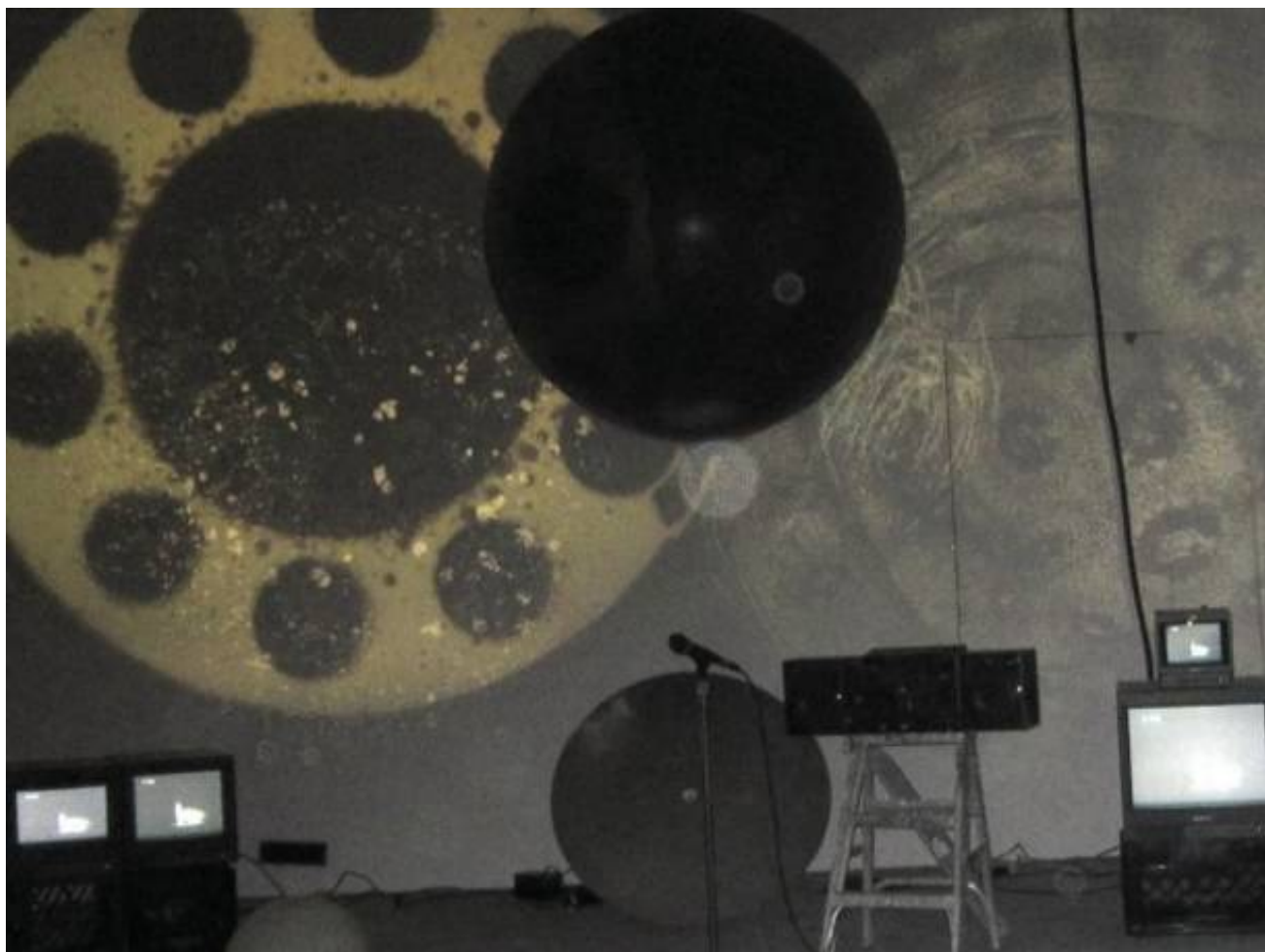


## Aldo Tambellini Restages 1968 "Electromedia" Performance in NYC

Maria Cammarata (November 25, 2009)



The 1968 legendary and critically acclaimed "Black Zero" Performance (1965-68) by 79 year old artist and Cambridge, MA resident, Aldo Tambellini, was restaged in its original form after 41 years and performed at the White Box Theater in New York City on November 22, 2009 as part of the PERFORMA09 Biennale

"Black Zero" was painstakingly reconstructed by the artist himself and Christoph Draeger who was the curator of the program. The Program featured one original collaborator, painter/activist/anarchist Ben Morea, who was part of Tambellini's Group Center, and a rare recording of the voice of the legendary black poet, member of the UMBRA Group, Calvin C. Hernton, which had only recently been found among Tambellini's archives. Hernton's original poems, recorded by Tambellini in 1966 to be used with "Black Zero", include the inflammatory "Jitterbugging in the Street" and "I Monster"



Daemon." The Performer was Maggie Clapis. "Black Zero" featured avant-garde music improvised live by William Parker at the double bass who the Allmusic Guide calls Free Jazz's pre-eminent bass player of today and Hill Green on the bass.

Aldo Tambellini wrote this synopsis for "Black Zero" in 1965: "At present, 'BLACK ZERO' keeps on changing and growing with each presentation, just like the BLACK balloon which appears in the performance agonizingly grows, expands and disappears.

In BLACK ZERO, you'll be inside of the black womb of the Space Era. And in that womb, the Black poet, Calvin C. Hernton, the famous African-American poet will read his poems. The plastic gas-masked figure floats like an astronaut under the expanding simultaneous motion of the stars. The television monitors pulsate in their insane cosmic dance. One day the light and the energy of the sun will become ice cold and the enormous sun disc will become BLACK."

Black Zero at White Box not only, offered the rare opportunity of a late glimpse into the tumultuous era of the mid-sixties; but, it, truly, was a mind-expanding experience. Black Zero was created as a universal, abstract vision, intercellular and interstellar at the same time, yet symbolically, it was also a highly political account of racial tensions. Tambellini's philosophical views, recorded in the mid-sixties,

appeared strikingly contemporary: In the 60's Tambellini wrote, "The concept of instability, impermanency, and weightlessness will become part of man or man part of it. These Concepts will become instantaneous, not everlasting but ever changing." "It will be an exciting experiment to see how the political aspect of the piece, firmly rooted in the revolutionary culture of the decade when it was first created and performed, will impact on a contemporary audience," Curator Draeger said before the Performance.

The original "Black Zero" was a radical precursor to Andy Warhol's Plastic Inevitable and Rock music's psychedelic light shows. Whereas, Warhol used The Velvet Underground, Tambellini collaborated with Free Jazz improvisers Cecil McBee, Alan Silva, Bill Dixon and Archie Shepp and the UMBRA poets Ishmael Reed, Norman Pritcher and Calvin Hernton.

Tambellini is a painter, sculpture and media-arts pioneer who made his first video in 1965, the classic "Black ". The same year he began to experiment with multimedia performance ("Black Zero"), incorporating film, slides, music, poetry and dance-he called the new art form "Electromedia". In 1966 he opened the Gate Theatre in the Lower East Side of New York, a forum for experimental film and video. IN 1967, with Otto Piene, he co-founded the Black Gate Theater, New York's first multi-media and installation space in NYC. In 1968, he collaborated with his friend and artist, Otto Piene in what is regarded as the first Television broadcast created by visual artists ever, "Black Gate Cologne", for the German National TV station WDR.

In 1969 he won the Grand Prix at Oberhausen Film Festival for "Black TV,". Described as "an artist's sensory perception of the violence of the world we live in, projected through the television tube." He was a Fellow at the Center of Advanced Visual Studies at MIT in Cambridge from 1975-1986. In 2007, Aldo received the key to the City of Cambridge for his contribution to the cultural environment of the City. He lives and works in Cambridge, MA.

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