the PHOSPHERE

When I close my eyes phosphorescent blooms appear and fade
and are reborn like fleshy fireworks.
I pass through strange lands with creatures for company.
No doubt you are there, my beautiful discreet spy.
And the palpable soul of the vast reaches.
And perfumes of the sky and the stars
Robert Desnos - *The Spaces of Sleep (Espaces du Sommeil) in Corps et Biens*

The Phosphere

Close your eyes for me. Close your eyes, and try looking *inside* of them, as if you tried to study the inside of your eyelids. Can you see them? **The little flashes of light that pass fleetingly,** so quick that you even doubt they're there. Little fireworks of white light that disappear as soon as you try to properly look at them. Phosphenes.

Phosphenes appear most often if you rub your eyes, in effect, stimulating the cells of the retina to get this star-like, internal cinemascope of colours and visions. What Poet Robert Desnos called *'phosphorescent blooms (that) appear and fade and are reborn like fleshy fireworks'*. The name itself lends itself to the relation to fireworks, as its greek etymology means 'show' and 'light'.

The experience

A Sphere, of a 2.3 m diameter (7.544feet) is installed in an empty room. The room itself should be dark, with the only source of light coming from the sphere, which is made of intense lights whose patterns resembles firework explosions.

You book your experience with a time slot - the experience will last 20 min or so. You either book for two or accept to be paired at random.

The idea behind the **Phosphere is to recreate the interior of the eyeball** - the 'screen' of phosphenes - on the wall of a sphere that you walk into thus creating an immersive experience of our eyes' fireworks. **The immersion is our own body.**

We are interested in testing how strongly we can create an evocation of fireworks in people, in a **multi-sensory experience that would recreate the experience of fireworks in all but their firing**. Using the strong and almost universal association of **the smell of gunpowder,** and the sounds of fireworks, we want to answer the question: **do you have to see fireworks to feel them?**

The experience should be devised for **two people**. Y**ou can choose to come as a pair, or accept to be paired at random with another person**. *'Theirs is another type of combustion, perhaps more ripe because it opens in plain sight, their ardor electrifies the space'* (*Fireworks, Harborfest* - Luisa A. Igloria).

To go even further, we could think of **devising games and questions and movements (holding hands, facing each other, tell each other what they see or saw,...) for each couple to reflect on the experience with each other. Let's create fireworks, of all kind.**

Finally, and as **phosphenes can be safely generated with electrodes (and DTL electrodes specifically) or transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS),** we should consider an alternative experience for **visually impaired people and people wishing to try it, where the experience is purely created with the electrodes and not with the external lights,** to see if the apparition of phosphenes / fireworks is more varied and with intense if accompanied with **sound and smell. This could also generate precious data for research. Interesting people to work with could be Prof Vincent Walsh (from the Applied Cognitive Neuroscience group at UCL) and Prof Martin Eimer at Birkbeck College.**