

CYFEST Video Screening Program: *Sensory/Nuances*

Curated by Victoria Ilyushkina

The program *Sensory/Nuances* explores the sophisticated ways contemporary media artists and directors are redefining our understanding of perception. Rather than merely documenting sensory experience, the artists in this program employ innovative techniques to transform perception into abstract, metaphorical, and scientific concepts. Their work suggests that perception is not a passive reception of external stimuli but a complex, embodied, and culturally mediated process.

Concerning sensory aesthetics, sight and sound are the primary mediums. The artists use them to evoke other, more visceral senses, creating a rich, multi-layered experience. Sergey Parajanov's film directly engages vision by focusing on the painterly texture and sensual atmosphere of art. His aesthetic language is not just about what is seen but how it feels to the eye. Similarly, Louis-Paul Caron's works use the aesthetics of American realist painting to create visually striking yet unsettling scenes. Mathilde Reynaud's *Lemna* combines digitally rendered 3D imagery with distinctive color grading to observe the plant world.

Other artists in the program operate at the intersection of art and empirical science, treating perception as a field for data-driven inquiry. Amy Karle visualizes a scientific process — the growth of bone, presented as a 3D-printed scaffold designed for cell growth in a bioreactor — transforming complex biological concepts into a tangible reality. Alessandro Zannier visualizes DNA data and *sonifies* it into soundscapes, turning the genetic code of an endangered plant into an audible experience. Ethel Lilienfeld's work is a direct exploration of vision itself, scrutinizing ideals of beauty and the body through a virtual influencer. Mathilde Reynaud's *Lemna* also employs the technical language of 3D software and layered dialogues to create an auditory counterpart to its imagery.

A number of artists engage with the visceral and haptic dimensions of perception, creating a rich cross-modal dialogue. The sense of touch is explored through materials, processes, and metaphorical interactions. Sergey Parajanov's film emphasizes the tactile qualities of painting. Amy Karle's work is deeply connected to the haptic, dealing with the physical process of printing and the palpable reality of growing bone tissue. Ethel Lilienfeld's project presents a conceptual metaphor for touch, a symbolic and critical act of connection in a virtual space. Yulia Sharkina's film and performance explore the idea of inner vision, using the body to navigate the subconscious and reveal a spiritual mode of seeing.

Finally, some artists explore the cultural and social dimensions of the senses, showing how they function as carriers of memory and collective identity. Taste and smell, the most subtle senses, are primarily evoked through setting and subject matter. Alessandro Zannier's work, centered on a specific plant in the Venetian lagoon, suggests the scent of saltwater, swamp, and a thriving ecosystem. The goal — to preserve the essence of a disappearing place — implies capturing all its sensory qualities, including fragrance. Louis-Paul Caron's restaurant scene directly invokes taste and smell: the mundane act of eating contrasts with the dramatic image of a burning world. This demonstrates that sensory perception is not just a private physiological event but a crucial component of our shared social world.

Taken together, the works in *Sensory/Nuances* propose that contemporary artistic practice has become a new site for philosophical and scientific inquiry. These artists use their media to investigate reality, consciousness, and what it means to perceive in a world mediated by technology and culture. The program raises questions about the role of technology in shaping perception, exploring how it can both reveal sensory mechanisms and act as a new kind of filter.