

# CYFEST Video Screening Program:

## *Sensory/Nuances*

The program *Sensory/Nuances* explores the sophisticated ways contemporary media artists and directors are redefining our understanding of perception. Rather than merely documenting the senses, 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.

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.

### **Sergei Parajanov**

Hakob Hovnatanyan, 1967, 10 min 40 sec

Operator: Karen Mesyan Composer: Stepan Shakaryan

Production Yerevan Chronicle and Documentary Film Studio 1967/ Courtesy to Union of Film Professionals of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia

This film is dedicated to the classic of Armenian painting, Hakob Hovnatanyan, one of the finest European portrait painters of the 19th century. He was the first Armenian artist who moved beyond religious themes, which had dominated Armenian fine art for 15 centuries.

One of Parajanov's early works, the film directly engages vision by focusing on painterly texture and the sensual atmosphere of art. Here his creative method begins: a "static cinema," where each frame resembles a painting. His aesthetic language is not just about what is seen but how it feels to the eye.

Sergey Parajanov (1924–1990) was a Soviet film director and screenwriter. His films are renowned for their poetic, non-linear, and symbolic nature. Widely regarded by filmmakers, critics, and historians as one of the greatest and most influential directors of all time, he has been described as a "magician," a "master," and a "conjurer of cinematic worlds."

Parajanov's works are ranked among the greatest films of all time by *Sight & Sound*. He received awards at the Mar del Plata Film Festival, Istanbul International Film Festival, Nika Awards, Rotterdam International Film Festival, Sitges – Catalan International Film Festival, São Paulo International Film Festival, and many others. A comprehensive retrospective took place in 2010 at BFI Southbank in London.

## **Mathilde Reynaud**

*Lemna, 2023, 13 min*

Production: Le Fresnoy – Studio National des Arts Contemporains with the support of DRAC and Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (Fond SCAN)

In a realm of suspension, two women naturalists observe the plant world in the digital age. They merge their bodies into a strange, luminous environment. Their story recalls the legacy of 19th-century English and American women botanists, carrying the spirit of emancipation across past and future. Their dialogues, born from the study of plants, intertwine with the technical language of 3D software, revealing a shared sensitivity between scientific and digital practices, marked by feminist empowerment.

Mathilde Reynaud born 1994 lives and works in Saint-Étienne, France. Her practice centers on 3D digital imagery as a tool of empowerment through a feminist lens. Through installations, films, and video games, she explores the relationships we form with virtual environments and the ecosystems they generate. By examining how technical systems influence emerging phenomena, she questions how digital tools shape our perception of the world. Her speculative approach leans toward science fiction, opening spaces for reflection on nature, otherness, feminism, and everyday life.

## **Amy Karle**

*Bringing Bones to Life, 2016, 4 min 25 sec*

Amy Karle's Regenerative Reliquary (2016) is a living-systems bioart sculpture that uses 3D-printed, generatively designed scaffolds housed in a bioreactor, an illuminated "mechanical womb" to invite stem cells to attach and form bone-like tissue over time. Merging digital fabrication, wet-lab practice, and conceptual art, the work transforms a human-hand design into a site of potential growth and repair. Regenerative Reliquary opens questions at the frontier of bioart and medicine: What new bodies and therapies might we build? How do transhumanism, synthetic biology, and AI reshape our understanding of life and self? Karle frames the piece as both experiment and offering: a reliquary for future possibility and a meditation on the awe and ethics of creating with life's building blocks x AI.

Amy Karle is an internationally award-winning ultra-contemporary artist and futurist bridging biological, computational, and material systems to examine how AI, biotechnology, and exponential technologies shape human evolution and the future. Works shown from Centre Pompidou and MoMA to the moon illuminate life-enhancing futures and accessible ethical frameworks. Recognized among BBC's 100 most influential and inspirational Women and with the Pioneer in Design award, Karle catalyzes cross-disciplinary collaboration toward healing, intelligence, and creativity.

## Alessandro Zannier

*Spartina Maritima* / ARCA-DNA series, 2023, 32 sec

Graphic programming: Alex Piacentini (OOM)

Sonification: Davide Commone / Alessandro Zannier

DNA research database: Marco Dotto, Olga De Castro, Grazia Marina Quero, Otho Mantegazza, Alberto Barausse, Laura Airoidi (UNIPD)

As part of his ARCA-DNA project, Alessandro Zannier reflects on the concepts of Habitat, Backup, and Extinction. The installation features soundscapes composed from fragments of the Venetian environment, arranged according to the DNA sequences of *Spartina maritima*, an endangered saltmarsh plant and one of the largest living organisms by mass and area.

The idea of Backup, linked to his 2023 concept album Arca (as Ottodix) and DVRI residency in Venice, envisions a vast space ark—echoing Noah's Ark and the turtle *Chelonia mydas*—as a refuge for humanity. This work acts as a black box containing the DNA of a place: habitat backups stored against catastrophe, seed capsules designed to be sown elsewhere, enabling future generations to recover the deep essence of a lost landscape—its maps, history, artworks, environmental data, species, and archives.

Zannier's practice bridges art, science, and ecology. His earlier project *ENT*, linking environmental data between Italy and six continents, began between Venice and New Zealand and concluded in the United States, entering the collection of the Italian Cultural Institute in New York. He collaborates with universities and research institutes worldwide, producing artistic and sound-based investigations into complex systems and the interplay between nature and society. Under his musical alias Ottodix, he has released eight concept albums, two collections, and a biography—today considered a pioneering project in Italian electro-alternative music.

## Ethel Lilienfeld

*EMI*, 2023, 13 min

Production: Le Fresnoy – Studio National des Arts Contemporains with the support of DRAC and Région Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (Fond SCAN)

Ethel Lilienfeld explores the influence of the virtual body on reality in her hybrid project *EMI*, which includes a short film and a webpage with NFTs. Embodying the ideals of beauty and perfection, EMI is a virtual influencer who, like her human counterparts, promotes brands and products to followers.

Using EMI as a performative tool, Lilienfeld places the audience in a provocative situation that exposes the codes of consumption. Striking images heighten the tension between fantasy and madness, addressing social norms, aesthetic standards, and questions of identity and gender. Behind its seductive form, *EMI* investigates the growing commodification of the body online, guiding us to the threshold between the beautiful and the repulsive, the real and the imaginary, the living and the dead.

Ethel Lilienfeld (Brussels) is a visual artist whose awards include the Villa Albertine Grant, the Opline Prize, and the Prix Fintro Prijs. Her work has been exhibited internationally at venues such as FotoFest (US), Ars Electronica (AT), and Le Botanique (BE), with an upcoming presentation at the Aesthetica Short Film Festival (UK).

## **Louis-Paul Caron**

*Le déni, 2024, 0:13 sec*

French artist Louis-Paul Caron explores the contradictions of our time related to the environmental crisis in both static and animated works created with artificial intelligence. His pieces capture moments suspended in uncertainty, where urgency coexists with indifference.

Drawing on the aesthetics of American realist painting, Caron enhances the narrative dimension of his works by creating temporal ambiguity. The use of AI introduces subtle visual anomalies that mark them as belonging to an alternate reality—halfway between dream and memory. The nostalgic tone of these visions testifies to the fragility of our time and questions our attitudes toward the environment.

*Text by Zlata Teplyshova*

## **Yulia Sharkina**

*Birth of the Sacred Deer, 2025, 1 min*

A film and performance about an individual journey into the subconscious in an effort to merge with the essence of nature, revealing to the viewer paths of inner vision. An encounter with a totem animal becomes a moment of spiritual rebirth.

Yulia Sharkina is a body-oriented performance artist, model, and actress. She participated in the 2024 Venice Art Fair *Body Language*. Her works have been shown in Berlin, and her film *Harvest Time* has screened in Estonia, India, and Italy.

