

Approaches on Multisensory Narration (online, 1 Oct 23 – 31 Mar 24)

online, Oct 1, 2023–Mar 31, 2024

Deadline: Jun 30, 2023

Nora Benterbusch

Sensing Stories. Approaches on Multisensory Narration in Arts and Media.

Call for Papers: International and transdisciplinary online lecture series.

The dream of virtual reality has always been the creation of a digital world that is indistinguishable from our physical world. This is illustrated by current technological innovations, whose goal seems to be the development of ever more complex virtual environments as well as increasingly multisensory experience designs. Digital objects can be touched via tactile interfaces such as the Haptx Gloves (<https://haptx.com>), the ION3 (<https://ovrtechnology.com>) adds an olfactory dimension to the digital, and the Tesla Suit (<https://teslasuit.io>) addresses, among other things, the kinesthetics and proprioception of the human body.

Among others, the Swiss inventor Hans E. Laube made the first advances for a narrative integration of the secondary senses and thus turned away from primarily linguistic or audio-visual sensuality of narration (cf. Schmid 2008; Nünning & Nünning 2002) by developing the Odorated Talking Pictures (OTP) in 1940 – an apparatus, which enabled a coordinated scent experience in cinema. In this context, a high degree of familiarity can certainly be attributed to Aldous Huxley's fiction of the Feelies in his anti-utopia Brave New World (1932) – a multisensory cinema that addresses the olfactory sense in addition to the haptic.

However, a theoretical examination of these narrative developments and utopias is still largely lacking. This is where this lecture series would like to start and explore alternative constructions beyond the dominant linguistic and audiovisual sensuality of narration by connecting different, international fields of theory and practice. Following the example of Morton Heilig's visionary essay The Cinema of the Future (1955), an examination will take place, of how a narration is possible, that systematically addresses multiple sensory channels and induces multisensory experiences in a media context. Consequently, the theoretical examination of the narrative potential of different sensory stimuli as well as their combinations is in the foreground, but also aspects of the materiality of media and arts related to the conditions of narrativity.

Methodologically, the three-step approach consisting of an archaeology of past media, arts and visions, a reflection on current patents and prototypes, and finally an imagination of future media will serve to fathom developmental lines of narrative paradigms for future immersive media with the help of a look into the history of multi-sensory media imagination and intervention. Therefore, the planned remarks are to be understood as a backward- and forward-looking reflection on the

aesthetic development of future media, which on the one hand is to sensitize and on the other hand is to give impulses for a (r)evolution of storytelling as we know it. The aim is therefore no more and no less than to break open the existing paradigm of audiovisual narration and to reflect on multisensory storytelling against the background of past and present developments, visions and imaginaries.

In line with the methodological concept of the online lecture series, contributions from all participating disciplines and fields of practice can be submitted on the following topics:

1. Sensual narration / Narrative sensuality in non-technical (historical) artificial forms: Historical antecedents and current analogous examples (e.g., from culinary arts, festivals, theater, garden art, architecture, installations, narrative environments, etc.).
2. Sensual narration / Narrative sensuality in technical arts and media: Patents and prototypes (e.g., from gaming, media arts, cinema, XR, etc.).
3. Utopias and visions of (multi-)sensory narration: Imaginations and potentials of future multisensory storytelling; Elements of a language of multisensory storytelling (e.g., deductions based on the existing cinematic language of film, like the interplay of image and sound lead to a theory about the interplay of image and smell).
4. Finally, basic theoretical approaches of multisensory storytelling can also be a topic of discussion.

These topics will first be discussed in the context of an international and transdisciplinary online lecture series, and the results will then be published. The online lecture series is planned for the winter semester 2023/24 (October 2023 to March 2024) with a resulting anthology, which is to be seen as a further development of the presented ideas based on the interdisciplinary exchange.

The deadline for submitting abstracts (500 to 700 words) is the 30 June 2023.

Please send a short biography, contact information and the abstract to Nora Benterbusch (Saarland University) and Prof. Dr. Patrick Rupert-Kruse (University of Applied Sciences Kiel) via: nora.benterbusch@uni-saarland.de and patrick.rupert-kruse@fh-kiel.de. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact the organizers of the lecture series.

Reference:

CFP: Approaches on Multisensory Narration (online, 1 Oct 23 – 31 Mar 24). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 25, 2023 (accessed Jun 23, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/39144>>.