Editorial

This is the first issue of Sensorium Journal. Sensorium Journal is an academic publication, a platform for research and artistic practices that are sensitive to materiality, aesthetics and media technology. Sensorium Journal is collaborative, inclusive and open in its form. Thus, it is academically ambitious but not peer-reviewed, and it is a part of Sensorium, a new Nordic network for young scholars and artists.

Research that takes place in this collision field of media, aesthetics and materiality is interdisciplinary at its core, and therefore raises a need for a forum that exists beyond the institutional borders of the separate disciplines and is able to gather the diverse scholarly and artistic practices of the field. In Scandinavia such a network has been missing, but with Sensorium we intend to develop a space where doctoral students and other scholars and artists can meet to exchange ideas and develop collaborations. The network remains open for new suggestions as well as members.

As an introduction, a short note on the network's name will be in place. To classic theorists of media like Walter Benjamin and Marshall McLuhan, the term "sensorium" is frequently used in reference to the human sensorium. That is, the human apparatus of sense perception, the alterations of which both thinkers relate to innovations in technology: "Thus technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training. There came a day when a new and urgent need for stimuli was met by the film", Benjamin writes in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (s. 175). In *Understanding Media: Extensions of Man* from 1964 McLuhan addresses the human sensorium as something entangled with both media technologies and the physical world around us, or, as he writes four years earlier in *Explorations in Communication* (ed. Edmund Carpenter, Marshall McLuhan 1960): "Movies and TV complete the cycle of mechanization of the human sensorium. With the omnipresent ear and the moving eye, we have abolished writing, the specialized acoustic-visual metaphor that established the dynamics of Western civilization."

In recent years, scholars from the theoretical fields of post humanism and media philosophy has reverted to the idea of the sensorium, but somewhat in opposition to the anthropocentric notion used by Benjamin and McLuhan. Luciana Parisi, for instance, in her book *Contagious Architecture, Computation, Aesthetics, and Space* (2013), has written about what happens to the human perceptive sensorium when it is sparked by digital media, nanoengineering and biological post cybernetic control systems and transformed into what might better be described as a bionic sensorium – a thought explored in Jenny Jarlsdotter Wikström's contribution to this issue of Sensorium Journal.

Obviously, the history of the word Sensorium goes further back than Walter Benjamin's writings. In his book *Speaking into air* (1999), John Durham Peters draws attention to the use of the concept in Isaac Newton's description of universal gravitation from Principa (1687). Newton, in his explanation of gravity and

its operation as something passing "an insensible fluid", speaks of a cosmic medium or, literally, a "sensorium dei". This "sensorium dei" ties us to our surroundings – a thought that is echoed in Benjamin and McLuhan's concept of sensorium, although God is now out of the picture and the merging of the mental and corporeal dimensions is replaced by the human sensory apparatus and media technology.

***

Even if German media scholar Siegfried Zielinski does not use the word "sensorium" explicitly in his writings, his practice remains an important inspiration behind the Sensorium network, as is implied by our subtitle, Aesthetic Media AnArchaeology. Zielinski's media approach is based on a perspective of multiplicity which ranges over a broad field of experimental studies of different media, archives and aesthetical practices. Especially his notion of the AnArchive as a methodological approach as well as an alterative entity to the traditional archive, was an inspiration for Sensorium's first conference "A medium is a medium is a medium" that took place at Datamuseet in Linköping September 17 and 18, 2015. Zielinski writes in his *AnArchive(s): A Minimal Encyclopedia on Archaeology and Variantology of the Arts and Media* (2014):

> Anarchives develop in the perspective of a logic of multiplicity and the wealth of variety [. . .]. Anarchives make no claim to leadership. They lay no claim to knowing the truth about where things come from and where they might go. Origin is and remains a trap. As a matter of principle anarchives do not pursue a fixed design.

Most of the contributions to this first issue of Sensorium Journal, are edited version of papers held at the first Sensorium Conference, and since the conference was explicitly Nordic in its scope, this issue has become semi-polyphonic with contributions in three languages. The issue might not qualify strictly as an anarchive, but we hope that this gathering of different

approaches to both media history, literature and aesthetics can cross fertilize each other and be fruitful for further elaborations and new ideas in the future.

As a contextualization of the conference and the thoughts behind it, we print Solveig Daugaard's introduction held at the conference. Daugaard invokes Gertrude Stein as an inspiration for early media theory, and in acknowledgment of this, we have allowed the Stein-associations evoked by the conference title to evolve even further. An interesting part of the German Stein-reception was played out in the cybernetics circles of Stuttgart, as is accounted for in a short introduction to our reprinting of a bi- and almost trilingual version of Stein's famous 1923-portrait of Pablo Picasso "If I Told Him".

After this Stein-digression, the issue proper is constituted by a mixture of literary readings, theoretical approaches, media archeological studies and artistic contributions. Among the readings of artistic – and mainly literary – works are Johan Fredrikzon's "Word Processing as Madness" ("Ordbehandling som vansinne") that dives into the anxieties inherent in the apparently seamless writing technologies of word processing introduced in the latter part of the 20th century. Jakob Lien's "When Communication Breaks Down – Linguistic Encounters in Göran Printz-Påhlsen's Poem 'The Turing Machine'" ("När kommunikationen bryter samman – Språkmöten i Göran Printz-Påhlsens dikt 'Turing-maskinen'"), seeks out the limits of linguistic models of communication in a changing technological environment, and Ragnild Lome's essay "The Dangerous Omnimedia" ("Det farlige allmediet") traces the uncertain human agencies described in the Swedish novel *Miniput* (1965) by Nils Leijer, and speculates how this is related to the 1960s dystopic visions of new digital media technology. Even Jenny Jarlsdotter Wikström's contribution, "Horny plants – Botanic Desire, Nature Documentaries and Flower Poems" ("Kåta växter – Botaniskt begär, naturfilm och blomsterdikter"), contains readings of poetic and visual works of art, that are connected to

an examination of popular and scientific imagery concerning the "secret life of plants". Together, she puts these investigations of botanic imagery to use in an attempt to constitute alternative theoretical takes on non-human forms of desire and agency. In a more strictly theoretical vein, Liv Hausken, who, along with Otto Fischer, gave a key note lecture at the conference in Linköping, suggests a theoretical framework for the practice of media aesthetic analysis in her text "My take on Media Aesthetics", which maps a possible path of media aesthetics, as shaped by a professor in media studies, who commenced her theoretical journey in comparative literature. Charlotta Krispinsson's contribution follows the epistemology of portraiture in an archival study of the Swedish Portrait Archive in her text "Collecting Faces", and, with a more interdisciplinary strain, Lisa Schmidt is combining a media archeological attention with poetic close reading in her article "Digital Structures in the Physical Poem" ("Digitala strukturer i den fysiska dikten"), where she examines the digital aspects that become interwoven with an analogue materiality in recent examples of erasure poetry. Finally, Olle Essvik and Carl-Johan Rosén, who are both artists, reconstruct material conditions around respectively book making and code making. "DEATH OF DR SAROLEA" by Essvik documents an art project that grew out of a book by William Blades and "Movements Between Image and Code" ("Rörelser mellan bild och kod") by Carl-Johan Rosén, follows his attempts at reconstructing the code behind the film and computer program "*Complementary Cubes*" (1974) by Manfred Mohr.

Enjoy your reading!

Solveig Daugaard, Jakob Lien and Ragnild Lome