

Synopsis/Introduction: **“Multi-Sensory Aesthetics and the Cultural Life of the Senses,” or a Mission of *Ars Vivendi***

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The international symposium “Multi-Sensory Aesthetics and the Cultural Life of the Senses: The Sensory Turn in Anthropology” was held at G-Sec Labo, Keio University, Tokyo, Japan, on July 30, 2011. The anthropologist Professor Keizo Miyasaka (Keio University) chaired the symposium and invited Professor David Howes (Concordia University) as a keynote speaker. The following papers in this issue, written by Professor David Howes, Yosuke Shimazono, Seiji Murao, and myself, Yukiko Kato, are based on the lectures which were given at this international conference.

The Center for *Ars Vivendi* at Ritsumeikan University (Kyoto, Japan) and the Center for Advanced Study on Logic and Sensibility at Keio University (Tokyo, Japan) are both funded by the governmental Global COE project and have a shared interest in exploring the compound mysteries of human living. We, the speakers of the symposium, are pleased to be able to publish our papers in this issue of the *Ars Vivendi Journal*, which has been daringly tackling multiple problems on human living.

As Professor Howes thematizes, a “sensory turn” has come over the humanities and social sciences in the modern era, specifically in the last 20 years. Sense -- namely the five senses, vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste -- and its subsequent field of aesthetics had arguably been neglected in the Western logocentric world. However, since the birth of aesthetics as an academic discipline, which was developed by Alexander Baumgarten in mid-eighteenth-century Germany, the fields of senses have gradually attracted people’s attention. Citing Georg Simmel, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Marshall McLuhan among others, Professor Howes demonstrates how the modern and contemporary theorists have come to advocate sensory experiences seriously. In other words, how we sense has come to be as important as how we think.

However, these theorists are in fact still exceptional, and we assume that there are vast fields concerning this issue to be explored before us. We hope that this issue will constitute one of the initial steps of this long journey. As a leading scholar of the senses, Professor Howes first surveys the history of multiple studies on the senses and demonstrates the significance of the field. As a response, each speaker, Shimazono, Muraio, and Kato examines his or her specialized field in terms of the studies on the senses. Shimazono, a medical historian, reports sensory experiences in kidney transplant, based on in-depth interviews with 52 kidney transplant patients. In order to theorize the notions of “self” and “identity,” Shimazono carefully listens to how the patients sense or feel. Muraio, an anthropologist, also meticulously investigates how the Indonesian Minangkabau people feel in their bodily practices. Their methodology suggest that our sensory experiences could even be one of the foundations of our logocentric academic practices. In our democratized modern world, the issues concerning senses, – which are naturally arising from personal experiences, – are becoming increasingly significant.

In terms of *Ars Vivendi* or art of living, sensory experiences are needless to say important. However, as *Ars Vivendi* is nothing but an “art” or “skill,” purportedly passive sensory experiences are not always thematized in this discipline. In other words, in *Ars Vivendi* disciplines, how we “act” (for example, how we save people and how we take political action) is usually more significant than how we “sense” and “feel.” In this sense, the field of the senses could be a blind spot in *Ars Vivendi*.

However, when the symposium “Multi-Sensory Aesthetics and the Cultural Life of the Senses” was held in 2011 – at which time I was a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for *Ars Vivendi* –, researchers at the Center were gradually paying more attention to the fields of the senses in terms of art, aesthetics, literature, and narratology, among other areas. For example, the magazine *Seizongaku* (*Ars Vivendi* in Japanese) vol. 4 (issued in May 2011) thematized sensory experiences in gamers as well as in the “troubled body” in the field of literature. *Seizongaku* vol. 5 (issued in March 2012) not only featured art and aesthetics in *ars vivendi*, but also reported the symposium of narratology advocated by Arthur W. Frank. Frank’s narratology is grounded on our daily narratives in which we confess what we “sense” and “feel.”

These multiple attempts suggest a path that *ars vivendi* could take, that is, to

bridge “art” and “sense,” or “praxis” and “sensation.” My article on color points out that color could be a medium that overcomes the border between action and sensation. However, it is in fact the discipline of *ars vivendi* that can bridge “ars” and “sense.” By carefully and meticulously listening to our sincere feelings in our “troubled” existence, the political and charitable actions that we take would be even richer and more fruitful. We hope that our papers resulting from this symposium could help orient the forthcoming of a new approach to the discipline of *ars vivendi*.

Lastly, we would especially like to thank Professor Keizo Miyasaka, who is the very originator of the symposium, and has edited our papers. This issue of *Ars Vivendi Journal* would not exist without the inspirational ideas and helpful instructions by Professor Miyasaka.