

# **WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD**

## The World of ASMR

### **LARGE PRINT GUIDE**

the  
**DESIGN  
MUSEUM**

**ArkDes**

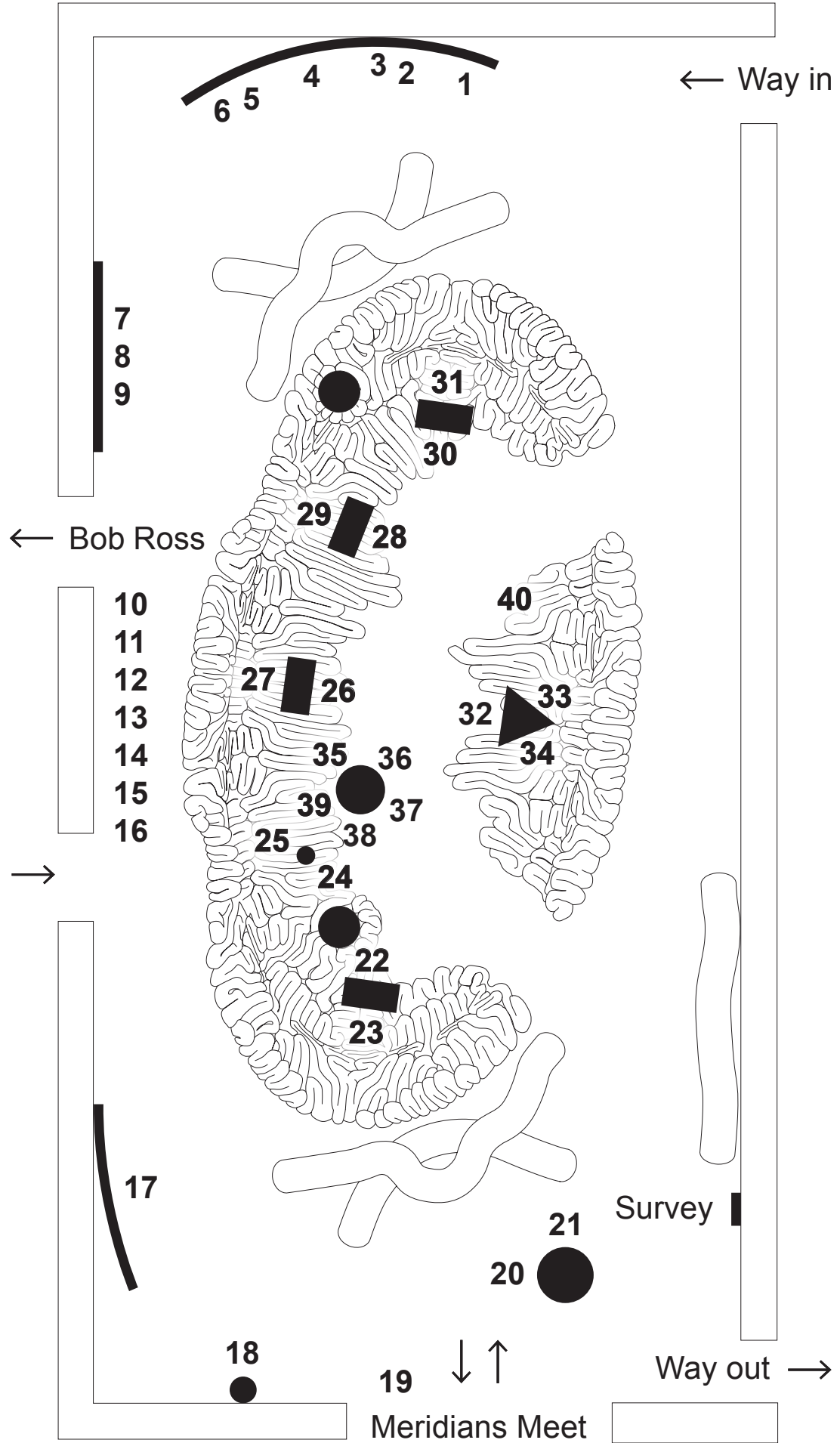




# Participants

1. Andreas Wannerstedt
- 2-3. Oscar Pettersson
4. Dr Formalyst
- 5-6. Wang & Söderström
- 7-9. Jennifer L. Allen
- 10-16. Bob Ross
17. anoASMR, ASMRctica, FredsVoice ASMR, Madeln France ASMR, MissASMR, Life with MaK, PierreG ASMR, WhisperingLife ASMR, UNO ASMR, TheWaterwhispers, Gibi ASMR, and Chiara ASMR
18. Tobias Bradford
19. Julie Rose Bower
- 20-21. Marc Teyssier
22. WhisperingLife ASMR
23. The Sugarcubes feat. Björk
24. Holly Herndon feat. Claire Tolan
25. BBC Radio 4
26. Victoria and Albert Museum
27. David Bull
28. The Slow Mo Guys
29. Anthony Wilks
30. IKEA
31. Virgin Atlantic
32. Haircut Harry
33. HidaMari Cooking

- 34.** 슈앤트리 SHU AND TREE
- 35-36.** 3Dio Sound
- 37.** Neumann
- 38.** DPA Microphone
- 39.** Chris Milk



(soft-spoken) but before I had even found a language  
to speak of it to speak of this feeling

          this mellowed river this stone's throw this electric (whisper: electric x2)  
  
the way water moves on in ripples (water sounds) a body folding  
          (pan left) or a river that is a river (pan centre) moving on itself and moving

(pan right) in all its (whisper) current (water bottle sounds)

          (pan centre, soft-spoken) the stone is becoming the stone became  
          (pan left, whisper) action

(pan centre) we had action and language just enough language to—

intent (pan right, 't' clucking)

(pan centre, soft-spoken) you passed (pan right) me (pan left, whisper)  
a disc ('sk' sounds, pan left to right)

(pan centre, soft-spoken) and later older

later following a recipe not for this (tapping) not for this feeling this (silence)

(pan left, whisper) you have everything you need

(pan right, whisper) the hiss of the can the pressure (pressure x4)

(soft-spoken) you are saying -there you go- (pan left, whisper: there you go x3)

(pan centre, soft-spoken) is it this are these objects what are they what—

(pan right, whisper) you don't think that (pan centre, soft-spoken)

perhaps you were (silence) it's just that (pan left, whisper)  
to describe it it's not it's what (it's what x2)

(pan right, soft-spoken) it's not a river it's a lake it's wind (pan left, mic blowing)  
(pan centre, soft-spoken) is it definitely electric this slow clay this radio static a recipe  
for shivering for waiting for (pan right, whisper) waiting  
(silence then pan left, whisper) waiting for the body (pan right, whisper) respond

**Callan Waldron-Hall**  
category: [unintentional] (2018)

This poem previously appeared in 'The body feeling'  
on Corridor8's website as part of a longer text produced  
in response to Bodily Poetries, hosted by the Henry Moore  
Institute, in partnership with the University of Leeds  
and Corridor8.



The eye—it cannot choose but see;  
We cannot bid the ear be still;  
Our bodies feel: where'er they be,  
Against or with our will

**William Wordsworth**  
**'Expostulation and Reply'**  
**'Lyrical Ballads' (1798)**



# Design that mediates between mind and body

ASMR is a term that describes a physical sensation: euphoria or deep calm, sometimes a tingling in the body. In recent years, an online audience of millions has emerged, dedicated to watching the work of designers and content creators who aim to trigger this feeling in their viewers. They do so by whispering or eating, touching or tapping, and more besides. This exhibition is the first to be dedicated to this feeling, and the field of creativity that is growing around it.

As little as a decade ago, ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) was largely dismissed as a figment of the imagination. Today, the term represents one of the largest movements on the internet, and one that has become impossible to ignore. As academic institutions around the world seek to make sense of it, creatives—known as ‘ASMRtists’—are building on a cultural movement that transcends language and geography in favour of bodily ‘feels’.

Like meditation or yoga, ASMR happens to both your body and to your mind. It is not about speed, but about focus and slowness. ASMRtists do not seek to entertain but to relax; for ‘experiencers’, they offer a degree of insulation from a noisy, wandering world. Through sound and film, broadcast through platforms such as YouTube or Twitch, works of ASMR make room for close-‘looking’, close-‘listening’, and close-‘feeling’.

“There’s no record of ASMR existing until a couple years ago, but it’s not as if this feeling suddenly appeared and swept across the globe. Most likely, people have been experiencing brain tingles throughout history—I’m picturing a filthy nomad warlord closing his eyes in pleasure as his concubine picks lice out of his hair, Catholics in the pews tingling over the measured recitation of Mass in Latin—but mostly kept it to themselves and some odd, private pleasure. Then came the internet and no one kept anything to themselves any more.”

**Harry Cheadle**

**‘What is ASMR? That Good Tingly Feeling  
No One Can Explain’  
‘VICE News’ (2012)**

ASMR injects the internet with softness, kindness and empathy. As a form of digital intimacy, it offers comfort on demand, standing against the feeling of isolation that constant connectivity can deceptively breed. Anecdotally, ASMR is

being used more and more as a form of self-medication against the effects of loneliness, insomnia, stress, and anxiety. This is a cue to its success, and to its transcendental appeal.

Everyone has the capacity to perceive ASMR, yet the experience is highly individual. The response that you have may be very different from the person sitting beside you. If you find a work of ASMR that triggers you, you might feel a tingling sensation appear at the top of your scalp and travel down your neck, spine, and arms. You might feel relaxation or euphoria very intensely or very softly. At the same time, you might feel nothing at all.

“There is a sort of relationship, a mutual trust between the creator and the viewer. The ASMRtist holds your emotional state in their hands, and by clicking on a video, you give them your trust—trust that they’re not going to suddenly scream after 30 minutes of whispering, that they’re only going to say nice things, even after you’ve fallen asleep.”

**Julie Beck**

**‘The Emotional Labor of ASMR’**

**The Atlantic (2016)**

# ASMR and Attention

In 2005, YouTube launched with the tagline 'Broadcast Yourself', offering video consumers the possibility to become video producers. When the iPhone was unveiled in 2007, the handheld smartphone and its mirrored surface soon usurped the television set. We have been attentive to the screen since the television entered our homes in the mid 20th century, but recent years have seen the screen become a part of our every waking moment. We no longer just stare at screens; we touch them, too.

Today, we tend to treat the blue light of the screen, and its frictionless surface, as an extension of ourselves. The smartphone represents a bridge between our senses and a world of entertainment and information. We can curl up alone in bed with our phone and feel connected just as easily as we can sit on a train and insulate ourselves from those sitting around us. Each of us is part of an economy of attention that encourages speed and can, in turn, breed a sense of restlessness.

The ASMR movement, which can be traced back to 2009, harnesses this reality. It subverts these technologies to provide a new form of care. It carves a niche on the internet and fills this space with personal attention, available on demand.

“We don’t even really want to feel how radically our body and brain has been expanded by [the smartphone] ... Good design is an anaesthetic against the shock that design is changing us so much, changing the world so much, even that design has become the world.”

**Beatriz Colomina and Mark Wigley**  
**‘Are We Human? Notes on an Archaeology**  
**of Design’ (2016)**

# ASMR and Design

Through touch, ASMRtists distil the character and qualities of ordinary objects into audio-visual experiences. As such, an ASMRtist's toolbox can contain an array of everyday household items used to trigger ASMR: a brush, a pen, a bottle, a pot, a torch, a comb, a candle, a book, and so on. It can also include less common materials that behave in unexpected ways, such as kinetic sand.

Most triggers rely not on the object itself but on the human interface with that object. Tapping and scratching, for instance, requires quick fingers or long nails. ASMRtists look beyond the given function of an object in favour of its particular material texture, its colour, or the sounds that are produced by it.

As the creative field around ASMR has matured, new genres have emerged from it, facilitated by the interaction between design and technology. A growing interest in sound and video production has led some ASMRtists to build small-scale studios, designed with the acoustic quality of the space in mind. Green screen backdrops are increasingly common,



allowing for more immersive role-play ASMR. Binaural (2-channel) recording techniques have also been adopted by the ASMR community, made possible by microphones embedded in prosthetic human heads or ears.

The wheel  
is an extension of the foot  
the book  
is an extension of the eye  
clothing, an extension of the skin,  
electric circuitry,  
an extension of  
the  
central  
nervous  
system

**Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore  
'The Medium is the Massage:  
An Inventory of Effects' (1967)**

# ASMR and Empathy

An ASMR trigger can be more abstract than a simple sound or an action. Kindness, compassion and positive affirmation can each trigger a response that may not necessarily prompt ‘tingles’, nor a sense of calm or euphoria. Many people who create and consume ASMR are simply searching for a connection with another person.

This form of digital intimacy contributes to a new emotional economy of care. It exists almost exclusively online, offering intimacy in return for trust, empathy in return for vulnerability, and comfort in return for dedication. The notion of proximity between strangers—the ASMRtist and the ASMR experiencer—exists outside of many of the social and material demands of the ‘real world’.

“Plugged into screens every waking hour, our brains locked into an eternal scroll, we are increasingly finding solace from stress, anxiety, insomnia and loneliness from strangers on the internet. The community is very real, a place of care and support for producers and consumers of the medium alike. But sometimes, between the cracks of the comment threads, it’s too

easy to glimpse many people struggling to get through, to cope, for whom ASMR offers only a temporary reprieve from daily troubles.”

**Huw Lemmey**  
**Experience Tingles and Techno-therapy**  
**‘TANK Magazine’ (2020)**

Although there is a difference between solitude and loneliness, just as there is between anxiety and an anxiety disorder, new structures of collective feeling—of which ASMR is a part—may be a response to largely silent epidemics around mental health. But online intimacies are often non-reciprocal, and dependency is not necessarily a form of self-care. If ASMR is filling a void, we must ask what has created this void. Does ASMR embody a solution to a problem that we do not completely understand? Is it a response to an urgency of which we are not yet fully aware?



# Works

## Visual ASMR

ASMR can be triggered by hypnotic or meditative movement.

**1 Andreas Wannerstedt**

**‘Slice It Up’**

2018

3D motion graphic (20 seconds)

Courtesy of Andreas Wannerstedt

**2 Oscar Pettersson**

**‘Rotating Rings’**

2021

Motion graphic (1 minute)

Courtesy of Oscar Pettersson

**3 Oscar Pettersson**

**‘Cactus Cuddle’**

2021

Motion graphic (56 seconds)

Courtesy of Oscar Pettersson

**4 Dr Formalyst**

**‘Pandamonium’**

2021

Motion graphic (43 seconds)

Courtesy of Dr Formalyst

## **5 Wang & Söderström**

### **'Synthetic Crops'**

2021

Motion graphic (17 seconds)

Courtesy of Wang & Söderström

## **6 Wang & Söderström**

### **'House Without Rules'**

2017

Motion graphic (2 minutes)

Courtesy of Wang & Söderström

In their work, designer Anny Wang and architect Tim Söderström blend physical and digital space in order to create unexpected experiences. Through one continuous vertical camera pan, as if on an elevator, 'House Without Rules' takes you through different floors in a house that bends the laws of physics. In 'Synthetic Crops', artificial vegetableshake, shimmer, rustle and pop in 'mind tickling' ways.

Wang & Söderström make materials, textures and objects behave in unusual ways. Often playing with hyper-realism and an uncanny sense of unease, these works are both meditative and hypnotic. In recent years, the boundaries of what is considered to trigger ASMR have expanded to include 'oddly satisfying' visual works such as these.

# Jennifer L. Allen

Assorted documents from a personal archive,  
2011-

Courtesy of Jennifer L. Allen

## **7 'Record of the first ASMR Wikipedia article'**

Dated 4 September 2011

Reproduced .txt file

## **8 'ASMR team meeting log'**

Dated 3 March 2012

Reproduced .txt file

## **9 'First ASMR Facebook group charter'**

Undated

Reproduced .txt file

Courtesy of Jennifer L. Allen

In 2009, Jennifer Allen coined the term 'Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response'. These documents belong to Allen's personal archive, and represent the first moments of recognition and definition of the movement.

In a 2016 interview with Craig Richard, Professor of Biopharmaceutical Sciences at Shenandoah University in Virginia, Allen stated:

“After reading the comments of others, I realised people would never be able to open up about what they were experiencing unless it could be discussed in a way that was objective, not tied to emotional or deeply personal terminology, and not suggesting aspects that were not in line with their personal experience.”



## **Unintentional ASMR**

ASMR can be triggered by positive and peaceful people.

### **10 Bob Ross**

**'Morning Mist'**

1985

Firm oil paint on triple primed canvas, alla prima

### **11 Bob Ross**

**Season 6, episode 3 of 'The Joy of Painting depicting Morning Mist'**

1986

Video, first aired on PBS (26 minutes, 34 seconds)

### **12 Bob Ross**

**'Mountain Seclusion'**

1989

Firm oil paint on triple primed canvas, alla prima

### **13 Bob Ross**

**Season 18, episode 3 of 'The Joy of Painting depicting Mountain Seclusion'**

1989

Video, first aired on PBS (27 minutes, 41 seconds)

**14 Bob Ross**

**'Purple Mountain Range'**

1992

Firm oil paint on triple primed canvas, alla prima

**15 Bob Ross**

**Season 26, episode 10 of 'The Joy of Painting depicting Purple Mountain Range'**

1992

Video, first aired on PBS (25 minutes, 9 seconds)

**16 Bob Ross Inc.**

**'Gold Creator Award', issued to Bob Ross Inc. by YouTube for surpassing 1 million subscribers**

2018

Gold-plated brass

Courtesy of Bob Ross Inc. (Joan, Annette and Walt Kowalski)

Courtesy of Bob Ross Inc.

Bob Ross, the American painting instructor and host of 'The Joy of Painting' (1983-94), is an icon of popular culture. In each of his television episodes, Ross transports you to a world of his imagination, teaching you how to paint trees, mountains and landscapes 'wet-on-wet' – a style inspired by the television artist William Alexander.

Ross's calm demeanour and gentle tone of voice enchanted audiences in the United States. Since his death in 1995, Ross has become known as the 'Godfather of ASMR'. Softly spoken words, and the sounds of brushing, stippling and scratching, are common ASMR triggers – all of which are central to Ross's painting style and personality.

Since 2014, when episodes of 'The Joy of Painting' were first streamed on Twitch and published on YouTube, a new wave of fans across the world has found comfort in Ross's laid-back approach and gentle disposition. This new audience is largely digitally native, born into a world where this sort of quietude can feel nostalgic. The official Bob Ross YouTube channel has more than 5 million subscribers – and counting.

Ross made three paintings for each episode of 'The Joy of Painting': one for his own reference, one for filming, and one to photograph for step-by-step instructional books that accompanied each season. The paintings on display belong to the last and are known as the 'Book' paintings.

## **Intentional ASMR**

ASMR can be triggered by personal attention and direct engagement.

### **17 'Definitions of ASMR by ASMRtists'**

2020-22

Courtesy of the authors

#### **anoASMR, 2020**

226,915,872 + views on YouTube

#### **ASMRctica, 2020**

36,508,242 + views on YouTube

#### **FredsVoice ASMR, 2020**

271,930,237 + views on YouTube

#### **Made In France ASMR, 2020**

112,412,396 + views on YouTube

#### **MissASMR, 2020**

74,250,339 + views on YouTube

#### **Life with MaK, 2020**

167,618,265 + views on YouTube

#### **PierreG ASMR, 2020**

168,762,657 + views on YouTube

#### **WhisperingLife ASMR, 2020**

1,857,286 + views on YouTube

**UNO ASMR, 2020**

46,191,791+ views on YouTube

**TheWaterwhispers, 2022**

47,418,024+ views on YouTube

**Gibi ASMR, 2022**

1,463,615,195+ views on YouTube

**Chiara ASMR, 2022**

356,172, 227+ views on YouTube

## 18 Tobias Bradford

### 'that feeling//Immeasurable thirst'

2021

Rubber tongue, soldered brass, electric components,  
PVC tubing, lubricant

Courtesy of the artist

Tobias Bradford, a London-based Swedish artist, creates performative sculpture. His body of work plays with the relationship between what is organic and inorganic, encompassing themes including nervousness and compulsions of the body. 'that feeling//immeasurable thirst'—a disembodied, fleshy artificial tongue, dripping with synthetic saliva—plays with the idea that objects mimicking something we might think we know can be viscerally convincing.

ASMRtists and those who experience ASMR exist parasocially – a psychological relationship that takes place through mediated encounters with a performer. This means that although one might never meet the other in person, there is an affinity and a transfer of sensation. This work provokes feelings in a similar way, highlighting how a range of individual responses (such as arousal, disgust, or fascination) can be triggered by inanimate objects. Whether or not it is intimate, playful, or simply uncanny is up to you. If you find yourself making fun of it, consider that it might be making fun of you in return.

## **19 Julie Rose Bower**

### **‘Meridians Meet’**

Commissioned in 2022

Meridians Meet is developed by Julie Rose Bower in collaboration with Tom Wilson, Anna Cocciadiferro, Nathan Taylor, Dani Mayes, and Yosuke Watanabe. Bower would like to thank Shure, Stage Sound Services, Queen Mary University London, and Ultrafabrics.

‘Meridians Meet’ is a live-studio space created by the London-based artist and researcher Julie Rose Bower. It is an environment of heightened sensory experiences that invites you to interact with a collection of tactile materials, microphones, and fellow visitors. Here you can explore the world of ASMR through five installations: the cave, a sandpit, the wishing well, a microphone with brushes, and a ‘mountain range’ of cloth. You are invited to co-create a living piece of research around a range of ASMR triggers, such as hand claps, footsteps, fluid sounds, microphone-touching, and fabric against skin.

According to Bower:

“The sound design of this performance invites you to nurture connections that may be experienced as tingles, calm, or perhaps some other somatic response. Your impression of these complex feelings is intimate and private, a self-portrait that only you yourself can know. That impression may be cultivated through choice and repetition; here, perhaps, you may feel ASMR in a new way, or you may take the opportunity to develop your sense of what ASMR is to you.

In this space you can call on the networks that link the ASMR online community, noted for its kindness and generosity. These sensual and technological networks—as well as its design techniques—are cross-pollinating offline in the present moment and here they extend into the gallery. As you enter, you add your unique presence to that of others in a space where we may physically meet.”

Julie Rose Bower’s practice encompasses performance, sound design, multimedia site-specific installation, and digital video; a recent work from her ‘ASMR at the Museum’ series with the Victoria and Albert Museum is showing in this exhibition. Her work as an artist, sound designer and teacher focuses on the cross-modal and embodied qualities of sound and specifically the intersection of sound with movement and touch. Bower is currently a practice-based PhD candidate in the Department of Drama at Queen Mary University of London.



## **ASMR and Prosthesis**

### **20 Marc Teyssier**

#### **Prototype for ‘Artificial Skin for Mobile Devices’**

2019-2020

Silicone, conductive yarn, electronics

### **21 Marc Teyssier**

#### **‘The Voice of Touch’**

2022

Silicone, conductive yarns, electronics, vocal bursts

‘Skin-On Interfaces’ is a research project initiated and conducted by Marc Teyssier, with the help of researchers from Bristol Interaction Group (Anne Roudaut), Telecom Paris (Eric Lecolinet), and Sorbonne Université (Gilles Bailly, Catherine Pelachaud). The ‘Mapping 24 Emotions Conveyed by Brief Human Vocalization’ sound bank was produced by Alan S. Cowen, Hillary Anger Elfenbein, Petri Laukka, and Dacher Keltner.

In 2019, the researcher and interaction designer Marc Teyssier published a project that took the internet by storm. As photographs of it went viral, many people had a response to the hyper-realistic artificial skin that Teyssier developed. For this exhibition, Teyssier also presents ‘The Voice of Touch’ – a tablet of ‘skin’, modelled on the artist themselves, that you are invited to touch. As you stroke, pinch, or press the surface, a specific vocal burst is triggered.

The 'skin' is in fact made of silicone. The 'Skin-On Interfaces' research project, of which these objects are a part, is focused on finding new ways for you to interact with the devices that you use every day, such as your smartphone. Can you imagine stroking, pinching, or squeezing your Instagram feed, for instance?

## **Intentional ASMR**

ASMR can be triggered by whispering and other soft mouth sounds.

### **22 WhisperingLife ASMR**

1,857,286+ views on YouTube

**'Whisper 1 - hello!'**

2009

Video (1 minute, 46 seconds)

Courtesy of the artist

This is the first whispering video uploaded to YouTube. By extension, it is the first ASMR video. In 2009, this exact description accompanied the film:

“I know this might sound really weird to some, but i love hearing people whisper! So i though i would make a whispering channel. No haters please. If you don't like it then get off my channel... simple as :) For those of you who love to hear people whisper too...i hope you like my whispers!! xx”

WhisperingLife, now an optician based in the United Kingdom, is widely credited as a seminal figure in the ASMR movement. She continues to make ASMR today, publishing on YouTube.

## **Unintentional ASMR**

ASMR can be triggered by watching someone explain something.

### **23 The Sugarcubes feat. Björk**

#### **‘Television Talk’**

1988

Video (3 minutes, 30 seconds)

Director: Óskar Jónasson

© One Little Independent Records

In 1988, the Icelandic artist Björk was the lead singer of The Sugarcubes. In this film, which was part of a documentary made about the band, Björk describes how a television works. Her softly spoken description is accompanied by a close-up shot of her finger tracing the inside of a cathode-ray tube television set:

“This looks like a city; like a little model of a city. And all the houses, which are here, and streets... This is maybe an elevator.”

The success of an ASMR work is often determined by the relationship a viewer has to the ASMRtist through the screen. In this film, Björk’s explanation is both generous and empathetic.

## **Intentional ASMR**

ASMR can be triggered by positive affirmation and reassuring words.

### **24 Holly Herndon feat. Claire Tolan**

**‘Lonely At The Top’ from the album ‘Platform’**

2015

Audio work (4 minutes, 31 seconds)

Courtesy of 4AD Limited, by arrangement with Beggars Group

Media Limited ([www.4AD.com](http://www.4AD.com))

Created as a collaboration between the experimental musician and sound artist Holly Herndon and the American artist and programmer Claire Tolan, this track is an audio role-play in which Tolan reassures a wealthy individual with positive affirmation. It is the first instance of a commercially released album to include a track intended to trigger ASMR. Tolan’s gentle tone of voice is designed to calm, comfort, and support the listener. Tolan has been creating ASMR since 2013. Between 2014 and 2019, she hosted ‘You’re Worth It’, the ASMR show on Berlin Community Radio.

## Unintentional ASMR

ASMR can be triggered by calm, steady voices delivering factual information.

### 25 BBC Radio 4

#### Episode of the BBC's 'Shipping Forecast'

16th February 2022

Audio (10 minutes, 44 seconds)

Audio supplied by BBC Studios

Many countries have something like the BBC's daily 'Shipping Forecast'. A calm voice reads weather information relevant to maritime traffic in the area. Many listeners tune in not for the detailed report, however: they listen purely for its reassuring predictability and its calming effect.

Peter Jefferson, who read the 'Shipping Forecast' for over 40 years, described the importance of the broadcast:

“The version of it broadcast last thing at night has been likened to a meditation, a mantra, and a kind of lullaby since for many people it is not just rhythmic, familiar, and soothing but also the last thing they listen to at night before falling asleep. People used to write to me saying how soothing they found it after a long day to hear this familiar mantra and say, ‘I love it when you send me to sleep at night reading the ships.’”

Extract from an interview with the meditation app  
'Calm' 2017

## **Unintentional ASMR**

ASMR can be triggered by people performing intricate, delicate tasks.

### **26 Victoria and Albert Museum**

31,886,981+ views on YouTube

**ASMR at the Museum | ‘Conserving a  
Eurovision dress | V&A’  
2021**

Video (10 minutes, 57 seconds)

Director: Julie Rose Bower

Courtesy of Susana Fajardo / Julie Rose Bower /  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

In this work Susana Fajardo, a conservator, inspects the dress worn by the singer Sandie Shaw for her performance of ‘Puppet on a String’ at the Eurovision Song Contest in 1967. Julie Rose Bower documents the process using an ambisonic sound setup, allowing sounds to be recorded from all directions. Fajardo examines the dress with great concentration, using tweezers, pins, and stitching techniques to preserve thousands of tiny beads and sequins.

The ‘ASMR at the Museum’ series was initiated by the Victoria and Albert Museum in mid 2020. Bower, a London-based artist and sound designer, worked with the museum’s Theatre and Performance collection to unpack and inspect unique historical objects. With subjects from Charlie Chaplin’s bowler hat to a medieval choir book, the films offer insight into what it means to conserve delicate objects.

## **Unintentional ASMR**

ASMR can be triggered by people telling rambling narratives.

### **27 David Bull**

19,596,319+ views on YouTube

**'Remembering a Woodblock Carver – Mr. Ito Susumu'**

2016

Vlog (28 minutes, 35 seconds)

Courtesy of Dave Bull

David Bull is a British-Canadian self-taught woodblock printer and carver who leads the Mokuhankan studio in Tokyo, Japan. Alongside the illustrator Jed Henry, he became prominent in 2012 by blending the ancient craft of 'Ukiyo-e' with contemporary gaming culture in the 'Ukiyo-e' Heroes print series. In this vlog (video blog), Bull calmly tells the story of how he met Ito Susumu, one of the last remaining masters of 'Ukiyo-e', in 1986. Bull also demonstrates the precision craft of woodblock carving.



## **Unintentional ASMR**

ASMR can be triggered by materials behaving in odd ways.

### **28 The Slow Mo Guys**

2,279,117,088+ views on YouTube

**'1500rpm Slow Motion Paint Flinger**

**- The Slow Mo Guys'**

2021

Video (10 minutes, 41 seconds)

Slow-motion footage provided by The Slow Mo Guys

Gavin Free and Daniel Gruchy, a duo of YouTube creators known professionally as 'The Slow Mo Guys', film in extreme slow motion. Their channel, which has over 14.2 million subscribers, became known for using Phantom high-speed cameras to film everyday objects and thereby slow down the world for a (brief) moment.

While the human eye can detect up to 1,000 frames per second, the cameras they use are capable of shooting more than 380,000 frames per second. In this film, we see Free recording a spinning plate on which he places coloured dollops of paint. The result is mesmerising footage of the paint first merging together and then flicking away, creating hypnotic patterns and movements.

## **Unintentional ASMR**

ASMR can be triggered by people performing intricate, delicate tasks.

### **29 Anthony Wilks**

#### **'The Lost Art of Paste-Up'**

2019

Video (8 minutes, 9 seconds)

Courtesy of the London Review of Books

Bryony Dalefield has been working at a literary magazine called the 'London Review of Books' since the 1980s. Earlier in her career, she worked with 'paste-up' – the art of preparing the pages of a magazine for print, prior to computer-based desktop publishing. In this video, Dalefield revisits the bygone craft and demonstrates, with precise attention to detail, a lost art that was once central to every magazine and newspaper operation.

# Advertisement and ASMR

## 30 IKEA U.S.

'Oddly IKEA'

2019

Video (25 minutes, 43 seconds)

Courtesy of IKEA U.S.

As ASMR has become more popular over recent years, advertisers and companies have found different ways to utilise the format in order to advertise products. In this work for IKEA's 'Back to School' bedroom range, directors Geoff Levy and Holden Rasche conceived of an unconventional way to sell products such as bed linen, shelves, and clothes hangers.

We only see the hands of the softly spoken narrator as they touch everyday objects and the materials they are made of.

“College students are some of the most stressed demographic, so for IKEA's campaign, we wanted to show students that their products can not only be helpful, but help them relax.”

## Advertisement and ASMR

### 31 Virgin Atlantic

**'Virgin Atlantic ASMR'**

2021

Video (3 minutes, 2 seconds)

Director: Rick Stanton

Courtesy of Bark Films for Virgin Atlantic

As ASMR has become more popular in recent years, advertisers and companies have found different ways to utilise it as a format. In this binaural video, airline Virgin Atlantic records and heightens every sound of a business-class trip on one of their aircraft as a form of advertising.

Released after over a year of travel restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the company conducted a survey to discover which sounds connected to travel those former travellers missed most. 82% yearned for the sounds of the pilot speaking over the public announcement system, while 78% were nostalgic for the tinkling sounds of the drinks trolley.

## **Intentional ASMR**

ASMR can be triggered by care, personal attention, and grooming.

### **32 HairCut Harry**

168,235,385+ views on YouTube

**‘Traditional Japanese Wet Shave by Cool 76 Year Old Kyoto Barber | 下前理容室 Shimomae Barber Shop’**  
2019

Video (23 minutes, 44 seconds)

Courtesy of Haircut Harry

HairCut Harry has his hair cut all around the world. He documents his experiences by sharing them through YouTube. He began in 1999—six years before YouTube launched—and has found vast audiences since. In this work, Harry visits the shop of 77-year-old Mr. Shimomae Kunihiro in Kyoto, Japan. All films made by HairCut Harry are unedited, and focus predominantly on the sound of the haircut, the shave, or the massage.

## **Intentional ASMR**

ASMR can be triggered by slow, focused sound and visuals.

### **33 HidaMari Cooking**

416,957,667+ views on YouTube

**'Jam Butter Cookies\*Eggless'**

2022

Video (9 minutes, 12 seconds)

Courtesy of the author

HidaMari Cooking is a Japanese YouTube channel that creates instructional guides for making sweets and desserts. In this video, HidaMari Cooking makes butter cookies topped with jam. It is both an instructional guide and a work of ASMR, combining a task-oriented narrative with close-up film and recordings of the sounds of stirring, sifting, piping, and packing. Many find comfort and relaxation in watching ASMR that takes you on a journey with a predictable outcome.

## **Unintentional ASMR**

ASMR can be triggered by gentle, task-oriented activities.

### **34 슈앤트리 SHU AND TREE**

377,386,871+ views on YouTube

**‘Cut hair grown for over two years..’**

2022

Video (8 minutes, 5 seconds)

Courtesy of 슈앤트리 SHU AND TREE

슈앤트리 SHU AND TREE is a YouTube channel that follows a dog-grooming service in Seoul, South Korea. When dogs arrive for their routine clean and makeover, they often have too much hair and look a little worse for wear. This video takes you through the delicate process of grooming a dog whose hair has not been cut for two years. Hairdressing role-plays are very common ASMR triggers, as are other activities that involve the precise and delicate use of scissors.

# ASMR and Prosthesis

## 35 3Dio Sound

**'Omni Binaural Microphone (4-position omnidirectional binaural perspective microphone)'**

2018

Aluminium, silicone, circuit boards, microphone capsules

Courtesy of 3Dio Microphones

## 36 3Dio Sound

**'Free Space XLR Binaural Microphone (2-position omnidirectional binaural perspective microphone)'**

2022

Aluminium, silicone, circuit boards, microphone capsules

Courtesy of 3Dio Microphones

## 37 Neumann

**'KU 100 Dummy Head with Binaural Stereo Microphone'**

1992

Metal, synthetic materials

Courtesy of Sennheiser and Georg Neumann GmbH

## 38 DPA Microphones

**'DPA 4560 CORE Binaural Headset Microphone'**

2019

Gold-sputtered diaphragms, stainless-steel neckband, rubberised ear hooks, kevlar cable

Courtesy of DPA Microphones



3Dio, Neumann, and DPA are three sound companies that specialise in making multidirectional and binaural microphones (the word 'binaural' means 'to have two ears'). These types of microphones are used by some ASMRtists who want to record two separate channels of sound. The lifelike human ears on some of the microphones make them unique. They sculpt the sound from multiple directions, making it feel more natural when recorded. This allows for ASMRtists to make recordings that feel more intimate and more intense. Among others, whispering and ear-cleaning are triggers often performed on microphones such as these.

→ Try out the binaural 'Dummy Head' microphone and the 3Dio Free Space XLR Binaural Microphone by whispering, or scratching or stroking the 'ears'.

### **39 Chris Milk**

**'Sound for Vision', custom-built multi-channel binaural microphone used in 'Hello, Again'**

2012

Silicone, plaster, paint, 8 microphones

Courtesy of Chris Milk

Commissioned by Lincoln in collaboration with HudsonRouge,

@radical.media, Willo Perron and Associates

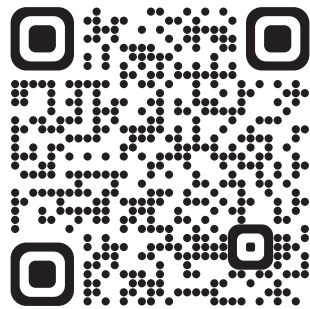
This bespoke binaural recording instrument was created by the director and immersive artist Chris Milk for an interactive virtual-reality film called 'Hello, Again'. While the musician Beck performed a version of David Bowie's 1977 song, 'Sound and Vision', accompanied by a 160-person orchestra

positioned in an ‘inverted theatre-in-the-round’, the microphone—with ears for eyes—was suspended in the centre of the auditorium. With sound and video having been recorded in 360°, and the film installation utilising facial tracking, viewers could experience the concert from all directions. As the viewer navigated around the room, the sound faded between each channel (each ear) in turn. In the words of Chris Milk:

“The idea was for Beck to be surrounded by a 400-person audience on a rotating platform, surrounded by a 200-person orchestra... I wanted the experience to feel like you were sitting in the middle of an orchestra with the accurate directional acoustics for whichever direction you were facing.

I figured we might be able to build a recording device like a traditional binaural microphone, only with a set of ears every 90 degrees to capture the sound facing in multiple directions simultaneously. Then when you were inside the eventual VR [virtual reality] experience, we would crossfade between the ears as you turned your head. By some miracle, it all worked.”

→ **Take part in a short survey about ASMR triggers that will be used by future researchers.**



Scan the QR code to take the survey.  
Please use headphones.

More and more universities and research organisations are beginning to study the psychological effects of ASMR. Giulia Poerio, part of ASMRNet (an international research network for ASMR) based at the University of Essex, is a leading scholar in this field.

This two minute-long survey presents you with short audiovisual clips and asks you to provide emotional or ASMR responses. These responses will contribute to a database of triggers that future researchers will use in their studies. You don't have to experience ASMR to take part, but you do need to be over 18 years old.

# Glossary

## **ASMR**

A static-like sensation of low-grade euphoria or deep calming triggered by gentle sound, touch, and movement. In its most intense form, it is described as being like champagne bubbles, starbursts, or glittering water falling down your scalp.

## **ASMRtist**

A person who makes works of ASMR ('ASMR' + 'artist').

## **Trigger**

A sound or action—such as whispering or mouth sounds, tapping, brushing, or role-play—that instils in you or somebody else an ASMR sensation. Everything has the potential to be a trigger, but there is no such thing as an objective trigger.

## **Intentional ASMR**

Something made by an ASMRtist that is specifically designed to trigger an Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response.

## **Unintentional ASMR**

Something that triggers ASMR incidentally, which has not been created with that intent, nor has been created by an ASMRtist.

**Frisson**

The sensation of 'aesthetic chills'. You might feel a 'chill' run up your spine when you hear a piece of music, or feel 'goosebumps' when experiencing a work of art, for instance.

**Misophonia**

To be affected emotionally by common sounds, usually made by other people, such as breathing, yawning, or chewing. This term, which literally means 'hatred of sound', was coined by audiologists Pawel and Margaret Jastreboff in 2003. A misophonic response is the opposite to ASMR.

**Synaesthesia**

When one sense, such as sight, is simultaneously perceived as if by another sense, such as hearing. Those who have synaesthetic responses might associate a place with a taste, or an abstract concept with a colour, for instance.

# **WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD**

## The World of ASMR

3Dio Sound  
Andreas Wannerstedt  
anoASMR  
ASMRctica  
Bark Films for Virgin Atlantic  
BBC Radio 4  
Bob Ross Inc.  
Callan Waldron-Hall  
Chiara ASMR  
Chris Milk  
Claire Tolan  
David Bull  
DPA Microphones  
Dr Formalyst  
FredVoice  
Gibi ASMR  
Giulia Poerio  
HairCut Harry  
HidaMari Cooking  
Holly Herndon/Beggars Banquet Records  
IKEA U.S.  
Jennifer L. Allen  
Julie Rose Bower  
London Review of Books  
Life with MaK  
Made in France ASMR  
Marc Teyssier  
MissASMR

One Little Independent Records/Björk  
Oscar Pettersson  
PierreG ASMR  
Sennheiser/Georg Neumann GmbH  
The Slow Mo Guys  
TheWaterwhispers  
Tobias Bradford  
UNO ASMR  
Wang & Söderström  
WhisperingLife ASMR  
V&A  
슈앤트리 SHU AND TREE

‘Meridians Meet’ is developed by Julie Rose Bower in collaboration with Tom Wilson, Anna Cocciadiferro, Nathan Taylor, Dani Mayes, and Yosuke Watanabe. Bower would like to thank Shure, Stage Sound Services, Queen Mary University London, and Ultrafabrics.

The ASMR triggers survey is developed by Dr. Giulia Poerio, University of Essex and ASMRNet. With audio by Clau Nader, Tom Swart, Quaint ASMR, ASMRPlanet, Studio Goblin, Simon Willmoth, Sarah Steed, and Agnieszka Janik McErlean.

# Thanks to

ASMRNet (Tom Hostler, GiuliaPoerio, Rossi Redgrave,  
Tom Swart, Andrew Li, Clau Nader, and Safiyya Mank)

Callan Waldron-Hall

Claire Tolan

Craig Richard

Elise Foster Vander Elst

Emma Weinerhall

Giulia Poerio

Helga Sadowski

Halla Sigurðardóttir

Hannah Burgess

Henry Buckle

Jalmar Staaf

Jennifer Allen

Jessica Taylor

JP Cavaco

Julie Rose Bower

Justin McGuirk

Justina Hüll

Kieran Long

Melinda Lauw

Priya Khanchandani



## **Curator**

James Taylor-Foster

'Curator of Contemporary Architecture and Design, ArkDes'

## **Assistant Curator**

Esme Hawes

## **Project Managers**

Nicola Underwood and Justine Boussard

## **Exhibitions Coordinator**

Giulia Cozzi

## **3D Design**

ĒTER (Dagnija Smilga, Kārlis Bērziņš, Niklāvs Paegle with Martins Stark)

## **2D Design**

Agga Stage, Alexander Söder with Emil Andersson

## **Build**

**345 Interiors**

## **AV**

Blue Elephant

## **Lighting**

Beam Lighting Design

Printed in the United Kingdom

The exhibition title references the online message board where the term ASMR was first coined by Jennifer L. Allen in 2009.

This exhibition was first shown at ArkDes in Stockholm (8th April – 1st November 2020). It has been created and presented in collaboration with ArkDes, Sweden's national centre for architecture and design.

### Exhibition Partners



**BAUX**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or redistributed in any form or medium, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the written consent of the authors and the copyright holders.

© 2022 Design Museum / ArkDes (The Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design)

# Visitor/Participant Guide

ASMR requires quiet, calm and comfortable conditions. Consent is key. If you feel uncertain at any point, please let the visitor experience staff know. Similarly, please treat other visitors with consideration and respect.

## **I understand that:**

- ASMR is highly individual and can be felt in different ways, to different intensities, between different people. It is also possible to feel nothing at all.
- The goal of the exhibition is to become more aware of what ASMR is and can be.
- ASMR does not commonly occur in group situations but the best experience will be possible when I feel comfortable, relaxed, and I am open-minded.

## **As a participant in a performance, I will:**

- Acknowledge my own vulnerability
- Respect the vulnerability of others
- Be considerate of the ASMR performer(s)

**If I am attending a performance, I will:**

- Listen to instructions and try my best to follow guidelines
- Not use my smartphone during the course of the performance
- Not take photographs or film during the course of the performance
- Ask a visitor experience assistant for help if I feel uncomfortable

---

Name/Signature

---

Date



