



## ABSTRACTS

### ***A Celebration of the Senses***

**Diane Ackerman**

I'll be exploring the mystery and marvel of our senses, poetically and scientifically, culturally and anecdotally. To really appreciate the wonder of consciousness, we need to pay more attention to our senses, allowing them to reveal the world to us as they did when we were children, with fresh eyes, in mesmerizing detail, attuned to how they work, but also grateful for the sensory spectacle of being alive.

### ***The Art & Mystery of Knowing***

**Rebecca Alban Hoffberger**

"The brain is wider than the sky." - Emily Dickinson

From the surprising study of intelligence that single-cell slime mold evidence to the learned behavior of dogs that can sense real-time epileptic seizures in their medical charges from even miles away, we dwell in a vast sea of hyper intuitive consciousness, interactive sharing, and knowing. Upending the idea of big biological brain as the primary determiner of intelligence, this talk is an invitation to take a walk on the wild side of perception - intuition/gut - that fast train to arriving at pure knowledge. Come meet your fellow passengers: savants, dolphins and the likes of master remote viewer/cosmic painter Ingo Swann, inventor Nikola Tesla, ecstatic poet Rumi, and composer Puccini - all scouts among the brave "Evolutionaries" who dance at the frontier of wonder and awe.

### ***VR & Self Compassion: The Evolution of Story Telling***

**Kelly Fitzsimmons**

The success of Virtual Reality today has a great deal to do with its ability to transport us completely into different realities. Unlike movies where immersion results from our willingness to suspend disbelief, we experience an unconscious acceptance of the presented reality as real in VR. The dramatic difference between these two states can be seen in the manifestation of odd behaviors, such as the unwillingness to perform certain tasks within VR that would be risky in real life but completely safe within the experience. Even though we are consciously aware of our safety (i.e. I am standing safely within an office building watching VR), many of us cannot override our deeper level safety systems that cause us to recoil.

When discussing the future possibilities of cinematic VR experiences, pundits often refer to Virtual Reality as the ultimate empathy machine. And yet, that's not what makes it unique. A well executed social justice documentary, a stirring play, a great book all invoke empathy and can move people to action. However, VR has the unique ability to accelerate learning through immersion and drive the experiencer toward deeper emotional ground. Thanks to VR taking over multiple senses (i.e. sight, touch, sound, movement in space), we can now tell fully immersive stories from the first person perspective. It is in VR's unique ability to put a person directly into another's shoes and then walk that proverbial mile, which changes how we perceive the world. This change in perception is brought on not by empathy -- where we may

feel bad when we witness bad things happening to someone portrayed -- but rather due to self-compassion -- where we assess that we don't want that bad stuff happening to us directly. This emotional shift may seem subtle but it is the difference between ephemeral media that influences us and direct experience that changes who we are. Given how powerful VR storytelling can be, we will discuss the larger question: How can we best harness this new technology for our collective growth and good?

### ***REMOTE VIEWING – Factual Awareness regardless of distance, space or time***

**Joe McMoneagle**

“Remote Viewing – Threat or Asset?”

Remote Viewing was used and supported by the CIA, DIA, NSA, DEA, FBI, the Secret Service under five Administrations, and all the Intelligence Units within the Department of Defense throughout the Cold War. The CIA released more than 70,000 pages of previously classified data related to the Remote Viewing Project Star Gate, of which very little was operationally specific. This massive dump of meaningless inter-office detritus was intended to underscore its lack of value within Human Intelligence collection. However, it is surprising to note that it is the only collection effort which had seven major oversight committees, to include scientific as well as Congressional. It produced “critical intelligence” in more than 160 out of 200 efforts, intelligence unavailable from any other collection source in its first six years of operations. In face of such testimony, many believe it never worked. Senior Senators working within some of the most powerful committees in Washington DC, have proclaimed; “It’s the work of the Devil.” Forty-five years of science and demonstrative anecdotal evidence proves differently. It may be the very reason we have survived as a species.

### ***Realized and Unrealized Realities***

**Jason Padgett**

Our brains are capable of amazing things. I'll be sharing my story of how a brain injury changed my life from a hard partying goof off to an acquired savant and recluse who's obsessed with mathematics and physics.

How does some one define their reality? When an event is described by several people, why do they never tell the same story? Is your reality the same as every one else? I'll be discussing how through the Doppler effect and relativity each person has their own reality that is completely unique. Without using any math terms we will discuss how every moment literally has the potential to be anything and this leads to real and unrealized realities. We will delve into the wondrous and astonishing beauty of relativity and how every person perspective relative to what they are observing creates their own individual reality.

### ***Listening for the one who is listening***

**John Preston**

What actually is "awakening"? Is it a personal experience?, or is it a recognition of a non personal reality? Are the senses factors to be transcended in this awakening process, (like a recluse retiring to a cave alone), or, are they the research material to be investigated and engaged with? Who awakens? and to what?

I am a five element acupuncturist, sound healer, and lifelong meditator. I have been asked to relay the story of "my Path", my inner grappling with these essential questions. This narrative will include the descriptions and advice of profound teachers I encountered during what for me has been a long process. I will use this subjective narrative to illuminate the nature of the

"universal path ", that natural path of transformation that each and everyone of us are on in either an implicit or explicit way.

During this time I will briefly describe the non-self mechanism by which the senses function, and provide a basic technique that allows us each to de-code or deconstruct the apparent solidity of the sense wall down to it's constituent parts. The subjective science of effective meditation allows us to do "inventory" of our incoming experiences in order to discover their mechanical and impersonal nature. The question eventually arises,"if I am not the sum of these constituent parts, then what am I?

Each participant will receive a "sense kit" which will help us tease apart the sense doors during the talk, which will be participatory not passive. The presentation will culminate in a 20 minute sound journey, created with gong, bowl and drone, where each individual can relax with attention into the sound immersion meditation and experience what new insights this perspective brings them.

### ***Wonder and Awe***

**Louie Schwartzberg**

Wonder and awe bring us into the present moment, connecting us with the divine, which possesses the power to inspire and heal us.

Louie Schwartzberg, cinematic wizard, reconnects you with your human birthright: your innate spiritual resonance with visions of wonder and awe in the natural world.

### ***Embodiment in Virtual Reality***

**Andrea Stevenson Won**

We are profoundly influenced by what our eyes tell us about the world. Virtual reality is a medium characterized by providing visual feedback that changes as users move. This allows users to experience virtual worlds, but it also allows people to experience virtual bodies. When users wear a head-mounted display that feeds virtual content to each eye, they can look down at an avatar body that aligns with their real body. If they hold trackers in their hands, they can see their avatar hands move and interact with virtual content, following the movement of their real hands in the physical world. However, users are not limited to naturalistic movement. By altering the relationship between users' tracked movements, and how they see those movements rendered in virtual reality, people can inhabit bodies that differ from their own. For example, a user with a unilateral arm injury can use their uninjured arm to see both avatar arms moving freely and easily. In this talk, I will discuss how such novel avatar bodies can be used for clinical purposes, and demonstrate a module designed to make the building blocks of novel embodiment more widely available.

### ***Sense and Soul***

**Malynn Utzinger**

Through our senses, we come to know the contours of our world. Sight, sound, touch, smell and taste conspire to paint our innermost sense of what is safe, what is familiar, what allures or repels. Together they give shape to our visions and inspire us to create. They allow us to feel awe and aliveness, ultimately giving us a sense of self and connection. Malynn will take you on a visual journey which compels all the other senses to come forth, from the outer senses to the inner world, offering experiences of wonder, gratitude and knowing.