

iii) Choose a historic or contemporary media artist not discussed in class to carry out independent research that draws from our study of interactive media history, theory and its concepts and forms. The artist and their work should be relevant to our study of multimedia concepts and paradigms (ie Interactivity, Hypermedia, Immersion).

Celia Yew. U1830367F

Immersion is the experience of entering the simulation/suggestion of a 3D environment. In this essay, I have chosen to discuss a contemporary Media group called Bittersuite, which does just that with their immersive art. The group is made up of a core devising team: Stephanie Singer, Anna Pearce, Ashraf Ejjbair, Eileigh Muir. Bittersuite's main projects are concerts that create multisensory experiences for classical and contemporary music.¹ They also conduct workshops, talks and experiments that brings audiences and people together through immersion.

Bittersuite conducts several concerts that focuses on the idea of giving the audience a full sensory experience. *Tapestries*² is one of the most outstanding acts, performed live by Phaedra Ensemble. In the concert, the immersant is blindfolded and paired with a sensory guide who leads them in a sensory experience in time with live music.³ At different intervals of the performance, the sensory guide also gives them smells and feeds them different tasting foods. Different movements and types of touch are also offered to the immersant throughout the concert. Each sensory experience is designed to deepen the way u listen to that moment in music. This is an example of art which focuses on behaviours instead of objects, with its content being purposive instead of descriptive, giving rise to a new way of experiencing concerts through immersing the viewer in all their senses.

Another of their sensory projects is called *Flower Den*.⁴ Similar to *Tapestries*, the immersant is blindfolded and paired with a guide. They will be listening to Rachmaninoff's Vocalise through headphones provided as the guide leads them to a separate location, away from the event. Their noses will be filled with the scent of fresh flowers as dancers lift them up and slowly sink them down. The participants will be slowly set down on a soft satin pillow, with the blindfold removed. They will then be left alone inside of a tent made of fresh, seasonal flowers. They will spend 7 more minutes alone with the music and space. Akin to *Tapestries*, by removing one of their senses - in this case, sight, other senses will be heightened, increasing the suspension of disbelief, thus making the participant feel more immersed.

Not only does Bittersuite conduct performances, they also have an experimental and collaborative hub called *The Lab*,⁵ where they research new ways to stimulate the senses. They work with sensory experts to create multi-sensory works which teach us about the body and the senses. One of such projects is *The City Skin*.⁶ It's a project based off the fundamental idea that art and sensory intervention can have a powerful effect on the rising rates of loneliness. The City Skin is a wearable suit designed by Freyja Sewell & Stephanie Singer, that collects environmental and sensory information about the wearer and the city. The suit is made up different panels that measures and reacts to a different aspect of the city environment. It created two forms of public interactivity: the touring installation and walking workshops. The feedback and emotional response from the immersants are then turned into music by gathering the sounds and sensoral information gathers from the City Skin. There is feedback and feedforward displayed in the City Skin, which

Bittersuite focuses on mindfulness and new ways to experience music through sensory immersion. You don't only listen with your ears, but you feel it on your skin, taste the harmonies and smell the melodies. This creates a suspension of disbelief, which allows the immersant to be powerfully in the moment as all their senses are engaged.

1 "BitterSuite," BitterSuite, accessed November 7, 2019, <http://www.bittersuite.org.uk/>)

2 "Tapestries: BitterSuite," OPEN SENSES, accessed November 7, 2019, <http://opensenses.squarespace.com/2017-programme/2017/1/16/bittersuite-open-senses-launch>)

- 3 Nellie Eden and Jake Lewis, "How to Taste, Smell and Touch a Piece of Music with Your Skin," Vice, October 30, 2016, https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/4w5nx9/tapestries-bittersuite-immersive-theatre-multisensory-music)
- 4 "Flower Den," BitterSuite, accessed November 7, 2019, <http://www.bittersuite.org.uk/installations>)
- 5 "The Lab," BitterSuite, accessed November 7, 2019, <http://www.bittersuite.org.uk/the-lab>)
- 6 Freyjasewell, "CitySkin," WA, November 16, 2018, <https://freyjasewellwa.wordpress.com/2018/11/17/cityskin/>)

Bibliography :

- "BitterSuite." BitterSuite. Accessed November 7, 2019. <http://www.bittersuite.org.uk/>.
- Eden, Nellie, and Jake Lewis. "How to Taste, Smell and Touch a Piece of Music with Your Skin." Vice, October 30, 2016. https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/4w5nx9/tapestries-bittersuite-immersive-theatre-multisensory-music.
- "Flower Den." BitterSuite. Accessed November 7, 2019. <http://www.bittersuite.org.uk/installations>.
- Freyjasewell. "CitySkin." WA, November 16, 2018. <https://freyjasewellwa.wordpress.com/2018/11/17/cityskin/>.
- "Tapestries: BitterSuite." OPEN SENSES. Accessed November 7, 2019. <http://opensenses.squarespace.com/2017-programme/2017/1/16/bittersuite-open-senses-launch>.
- "The Lab." BitterSuite. Accessed November 7, 2019. <http://www.bittersuite.org.uk/the-lab>.