

WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD: The World of ASMR

Tour Proposal



The Design Museum Touring Programme

The programme was set up in 2002 with the aim of bringing design exhibitions to audiences around the UK and internationally. Since then, the museum has organised more than 135 tours to 137 venues in 38 countries worldwide. The Design Museum's touring exhibitions range in size from 150 to 1,000 square metres and cover all areas of design – architecture, fashion, furniture, graphics, product and more.

About the Design Museum

The Design Museum is the world's leading museum devoted to architecture and design. Its work encompasses all elements of design, including fashion, product and graphic design. Since it opened its doors in 1989, the museum has displayed everything from an AK-47 to high heels designed by Christian Louboutin. It has staged over 100 exhibitions, welcomed over five million visitors and showcased the work of some of the world's most celebrated designers and architects including Paul Smith, Zaha Hadid, Jonathan Ive, Miuccia Prada, Frank Gehry, Eileen Gray and Dieter Rams. On 24 November 2016, the Design Museum relocated to Kensington, West London. Architect John Pawson converted the interior of a 1960s modernist building to create a new home for the Design Museum, giving it three times more space in which to show a wider range of exhibitions and significantly extend its learning programme.

In May 2018, the Design Museum was awarded the title of European Museum of the Year.

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The Design Museum

**‘Weird Sensation Feels Good is an interactive assault on the senses – in a good way!’
★★★★★ Dezeen Awards 2022**

‘A visit is certain not to disappoint if seeking a sensory overload of visuals, sound, and touch’ ★★★★★ VOGUE





Exhibition overview

CURATORS

James Taylor Foster, Guest Curator from ArkDes, the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design

Esme Hawes, Curator at the Design Museum

EXHIBITION DESIGN

ETER

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Agga Mette Stage and Alexander Söder

VENUES

the Design Museum, London
13 May 2022 - 10 April 2023

TOUR AVAILABILITY

from Spring 2024

SPACE

approx. 400 square metres

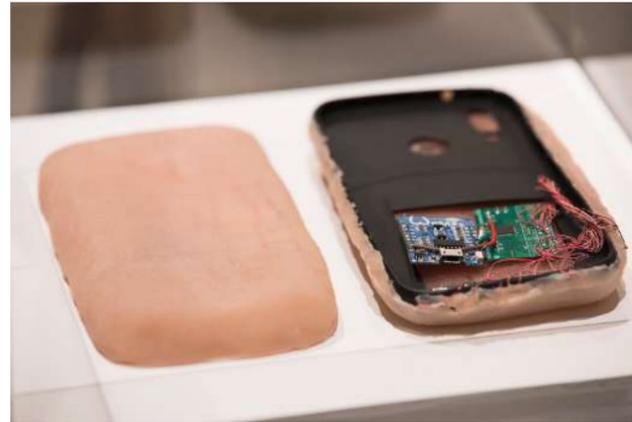
As little as a decade ago, ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) was largely dismissed as a figment of the imagination. Today the term represents one of the largest movements on the Internet, and it has become impossible to ignore. As academic institutions around the world seek to make sense of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

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 grown, dedicated to watching the work of designers and content creators who try to trigger this feeling in their viewers. They do it by whispering or eating, touching or tapping, and more besides. This exhibition is the first dedicated to this feeling, and the emerging field of creativity that has grown up around it.

WEIRD SENSATION FEELS GOOD opened at ArkDes, the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design in Stockholm in 2020, and it was the first of its kind to lift the world of ASMR out from your screen and into physical space. The exhibition at the Design Museum expanded upon the original concept showing how the ASMR movement has evolved in the period between the two exhibitions. Step into an acoustically tuned environment and understand how people are using new and existing tools and materials to navigate our complex world.

The exhibition won the Dezeen Awards 2022 Exhibition design of the year.

The exhibition is curated in collaboration with ArkDes, the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design.



What's in the exhibition

A uniquely immersive exhibition experience with immersive design and audio-visual works

Original Bob Ross paintings alongside episodes from *The Joy of Painting*

A selection of short clips by ASMRtists describing what ASMR means to them

A performative sculpture by London based Swedish artist Tobias Bradford, consisting of a disembodied fleshy artificial tongue, dripping with synthetic saliva

Prototypes for Artificial Skin for Mobile Devices by French artist Marc Teyssier

First whispering video, and first ever ASMR video uploaded to YouTube by WhisperingLife ASMR

Bespoke binaural microphone created by the director and immersive artist Chris Milk for an interactive virtual-reality film called *Hello, Again*



Visual ASMR

The exhibition narrative focuses on themes which aim to categorise ASMR, the first section looks at 'visual ASMR', showing how ASMR is not just audio-based and can be triggered by hypnotic or meditative movement.

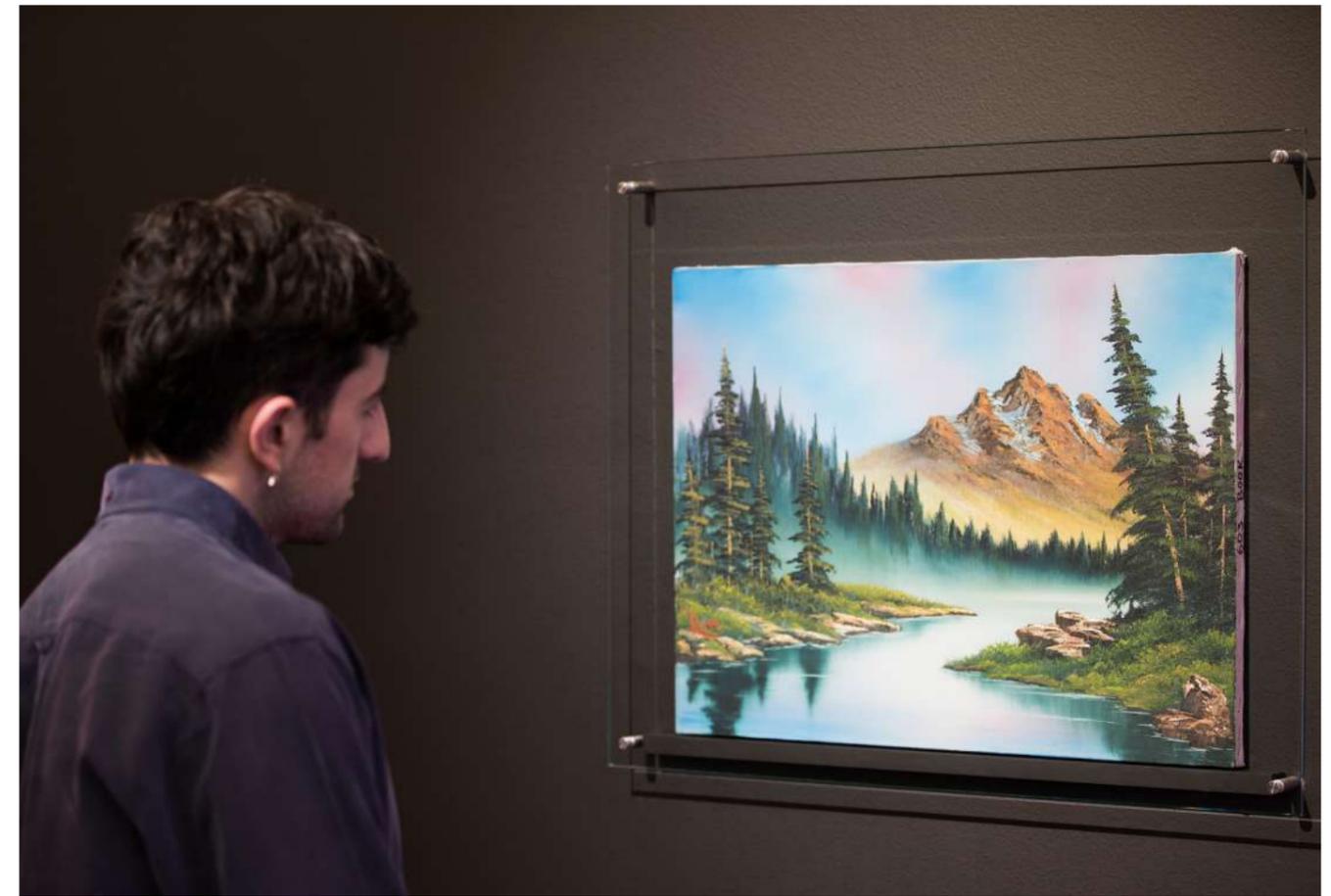
A wall of screens showing an array of examples by different artists. For example, designer Anny Wang and architect Tim Söderström blend physical and digital space in order to create unexpected experiences. Through one continuous vertical camera pan, as if on an elevator, *House Without Rules* takes you through different floors in a house that bends the laws of physics. In *Synthetic Crops*, artificial vegetables shake, 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.

Opposite
1. *House Without Rules*, 2017
2. *Slice it Up*, 2018

Above
Exhibition view, the Design Museum, London





Unintentional ASMR

Unintentional ASMR can be anything that triggers ASMR incidentally, that has not been created with that intent, nor has been created by an ASMRtist.

Bob Ross, the American painting instructor and host of *The Joy of Painting*, 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.

ASMR can be triggered by people performing intricate, delicate tasks. *The Lost Art of Paste-Up* by Anthony Wilks revisits the bygone craft of paste-up - the art of preparing the pages of a magazine for print, prior to computer-based desktop publishing. The success of an ASMR work is often determined by the relationship a viewer has to the ASMRtist through the screen.

Opposite
 1. Remembering a Woodblock Carver – Mr. Ito Susumu, 2016
 2. The Lost Art of Paste-Up, 2019

This page
 Exhibition view, the Design Museum, London



WEIRD SENSATION
World of ASMR



Intentional ASMR

Intentional ASMR can be anything made by an ASMRtist that is specifically designed to trigger an Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response. Often ASMRtists use techniques such as whispering and other soft mouth sounds, or performing gentle, task-orientated activities, giving the viewer personal attention and direct engagement, or saying positive affirmations and reassuring words.

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.

Oppofite
 1. Traditional Japanese Wet Shave by Cool 76 Year Old
 Kyoto Barber, 2019
 2. Lonely at the Top from the album Platform, 2015

Above
 Exhibition view, the Design Museum, London



ASMR and Prosthesis

As the creative field around ASMR has matured, new genres have emerged 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. Binaural (two-channel) recording techniques have also been adopted by the ASMR community, made possible by microphones embedded in prosthetic human heads or ears. This section displays an array of binaural microphones from brands such as 3-Dio, Neumann and Sennheiser, and allow visitors an opportunity to test them out.

- Opposite
1. Prototype for Artificial Skin for Mobile Device, 2019-2020
 2. Free Space XLR Binaural Microphone (2-position omnidirectional binaural perspective microphone), 2022
 3. Exhibition view, the Design Museum, London

Above
Exhibition view, the Design Museum, London



Advertisement and ASMR

As ASMR has popularised over recent years, advertisers and companies have found different ways to utilise the trend and format in order to advertise products. This section explores some recent advertisements from well-known global brands and the ASMR techniques they employ to sell products.

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.





Terms and conditions

Hire fee, on request, includes:

- Curation and exhibition concept
- Tour management by Design Museum staff
- Exhibits
- Images and films
- Exhibition text in English
- 2D and 3D design concept
- Selected display kit

Costs payable by the venue:

- Hire fee, in instalments
- Exhibition and graphic design adaptation
- Share of transport and crating costs
- Storage of empty crates
- Nail-to-nail insurance
- All costs relating to exhibition production
- Installation and de-installation costs
- Marketing



Contact

To find out more about any of these exhibitions and other tours available from 2023 onwards, please contact:

Chris Harris
Head of International Engagement
chris.harris@designmuseum.org
00 44 (0) 20 3862 5905

designmuseum.org/exhibitions/touring-exhibitions

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ArkDes

the Design Museum
224–238 Kensington High Street
London, W8 6AG
Charity no. 800630

designmuseum.org