

# CENTRE FOR SENSORY STUDIES

## DISSERTATION DEFENSE AND RECEPTION



Image credit: Detail of Jan Weenix, *Family Portrait of Agnes Block, Sybrand de Flines, and Two Children in their Country House Vijverhof*, c. 1693-1694 (oil on canvas, 84 x 111 cm). Amsterdam Museum

### Of Tables, Tongues, and Pineapples: Visualising the Sense of Taste in Early Modern Dutch Still Life and Natural Philosophy

Laura Eliza Enríquez

Wednesday, 12 March 2024

Defense: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm

Room LB-362, Library Building

Reception to follow at ~ 1:00 pm

Room H-1122.01, Hall Building

Zoom Link: <https://concordia-ca.zoom.us/j/84658693138>

In *The Art of Painting* (Amsterdam 1707), the Dutch artist and writer Gérard de Lairese (1641-1711) stated that the sense of taste “cannot be painted; but may be in some measure expressed by occult significations.” During the early modern period, European subjectivities came in contact with “new” foods and flavours that they had not experienced before. In order to make these experiences intelligible, they embarked on a journey for visualising the invisible. This dissertation explores the multiple strategies adopted by Dutch artists and natural philosophers to visualise the sense of taste.

Drawing from the fields of sensory studies, and the interconnected histories of art and knowledge, this project aims at investigating the role of the sense of taste in late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century Dutch art from a global perspective. It explores early modern ideas about taste and sense perception, and their role in art theory and scientific discourses on nature and the body. Modelling subjectivity and shaping society, the sense of taste was conceived within a larger project of nation-building and world-making.

Looking across a variety of visual genres and media, this dissertation proposes an iconography of the sense of taste that encompasses allegories of the five senses, still life, and scientific illustration. It looks at these images in light of an array of textual sources, including art theory, travel literature, natural philosophy, and culinary recipes. In order to do so, it considers three different case studies: Gérard de Lairese’s views on still life and the five senses; the tongue in anatomical illustration; and, finally, the global history of the pineapple as the epitome of taste and the ineffable.

Laura Eliza Enríquez is a doctoral candidate in the Humanities Interdisciplinary PhD (HUMA) program at Concordia University, Montreal, and Research Fellow at the Centre for Netherlandish Art (CNA), Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Her research focuses on the cultural and intellectual history of the sense of taste in early modern Dutch art in a global perspective. Laura has previously occupied the role of coordinator at the CSS (2018-2021). She has taught at Concordia and McGill, and published articles in *The Senses & Society* and in the *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*.

Winner of the 2025 CSS Dissertation Award

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