

# Vanier College 2026 Humanities Symposium - Thinking with our Senses

## PROGRAM

*We are embodied, sensorial beings. Our most basic experiences in life bring us into direct physical contact with each other and with the environment - be it natural or built. We interpret those encounters (often subconsciously) through sensory perception. The 2026 Humanities Symposium at Vanier College (2 – 6 Feb) will explore bodily experience as fundamental to knowledge making and to social connection, and it will tease out some of the contrasts with theoretical, disembodied aspects of our lives. In a variety of presentations and experiential sessions, we will think together about how we see, hear, taste, smell, touch, and move through the world and thereby construct our relationships.*

**\*\*All sessions are in the Auditorium (A-103) unless otherwise indicated**

### Monday, February 2

**10:00 – 11:30am: Sophie Donelson (former editor-in-chief of *House Beautiful*)**

#### **Designing the Feeling Home**

When we aim to improve our living space, we tend to focus on delighting the eye — a fresh paint colour, a new decorative accessory. But our homes nourish us with how they *feel*, not just how they *look*. A living environment that's restful, rewarding, and memorable, relies on far more than visual beauty — it must engage the senses, offering pleasant things touch and pleasurable ways to move around. So while the media will ask you to believe that creating a *nice place* is reliant on designer-approved tips and Amazon shopping lists, a *feeling-home* approach reframes will help you make a living space that responds to your needs, delights your senses, and leaves you with a feeling of gratitude and possibility. Donelson is the author of several books, including *Uncommon Kitchens: A Revolutionary Approach to the Most Popular Room in the House* (2023).

**12:00 – 2:00pm: Irene Feher (Music, Concordia) (Auditorium Stage)**

#### **What Does it Mean to “Live your Music”?**

We are wired to make music - yet many of us don't always know where to begin when it comes to expressing the sound world that lives within us. This participatory workshop invites up to 60 students in a playful creative exploration of melody, rhythm, and movement. No prior musical experience is necessary. Dr. Feher is a highly active and inspiring music educator who works with all ages facilitating free improvisation using gesture, body percussion and vocalization in ways that are accessible, engaging and joyful for everyone.

**2:30p – 4:00pm: Maxime Doyon (Philosophy, U. of Montreal)**

***Beyond the Five Senses: Rethinking the Map of Perception***

We usually learn an Aristotelian picture of the “five senses,” but Prof. Doyon will argue that these neat divisions start to fall apart once we ask what a sense is. Classifying senses by how they feel, by organs, by brain areas, or by “what they detect” breaks down in familiar and surprising cases. The payoff is a more realistic picture: perception is often multisensory, and some key features of experience are built through interactions between modalities. We end by asking whether there are more than five senses, and why this matters for how we understand mind and body. Doyon is the author of the book *Phenomenology and the Norms of Perception* (2025) and co-editor-in-chief of the journal *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*.

**Tuesday, February 3**

**10:00 – 11:30am: Dame Evelyn Glennie (via Zoom from the U.K.) KEYNOTE 1**

**The Importance of Listening**

Hearing is the sense, listening is the action. Our sense of hearing is constantly stimulated by the world around us, but it is in giving our attention to the sounds around us, to the voicing of ideas, and to our own inner voice that helps us to evaluate and navigate our relationships and build communities. Dame Evelyn Glennie will address the role of listening in knowing what is important to ourselves, having the vision and perseverance to pursue our goals, and developing the skills and resilience to accomplish them.

Dame Evelyn Glennie is the world’s premier solo percussionist. Her solo recordings exceed 40 CDs. A double GRAMMY award winner and BAFTA nominee, Evelyn composes for film, theatre and television. The Evelyn Glennie Podcast was launched in 2020. Evelyn was awarded an OBE in 1993 and has over 100 international awards to date, including the Polar Music Prize, the Léonie Sonning Music Prize and the Companion of Honour. Evelyn is Curator for The Evelyn Glennie Collection. Her iconic film *Touch the Sound*, TED Talk and charity The Evelyn Glennie Foundation embody her life-long mission to Teach the World to Listen.

**11:30 – 1:30p: John Lee Clark (Professional DeafBlind Poet / Concordia U. PhD student)**

**Pro-tactile Communication and Poetry**

**John Lee Clark**, PhD student in Concordia’s Humanities Interdisciplinary program, is recipient of the 2024 Miriam Aaron Roland Graduate Fellowship and finalist for the 2016 Split This Rock Freedom Plow Award for Poetry and Activism, Clark will discuss the range and possibility of Protactile — a new language emerging within the DeafBlind community. His unconventional poetic and academic path reflects his deep commitment to exploring how knowledge and experience can be shared through touch. He is the author of *Touch the Future: A Manifesto in Essays* (2024) and *How to Communicate: Poems* (2022).

**2:30 – 4:00pm: Erin Manning (Fine Arts and Philosophy, Concordia U; 3Ecologies) KEYNOTE 2**

**Thresholds of Experience**

"A thousand other things sing to me," writes DeafBlind poet John Lee Clark. Qualities of experience overlap. There is no distance. Everything has an effect. Everything makes a difference. A body is this quality of multisense overlap in incipient contact with an infinity of sense potentials. These sense potentials are not located in a discrete sense, or in an object. They cannot be distilled to an ear or an eye, and cannot be located in a table or a marigold. They are always between, amodal, operating as thresholds of sensation that carry intensities themselves carried in the feeling.

My focus will be on what sings on the thresholds of experience, against the assumptions that come with neurotypicality, steeped in what John Lee Clark calls distantism: that a body is an enclosure; that the world is at arm’s length from the body; that certain bodies have more value than others (white bodies, able bodies); that there is a baseline of sensation that is “normal”; that there are five senses that can be delineated from one another; that life without any of those senses is a truncated life.

Erin Manning’s books include *The Being of Relation* (Intellect 2025), *Unsettled* (minor compositions 2025), *Out of the Clear* (minor compositions 2022), and *For a Pragmatics of the Useless* (2020). She works at the intersection of the three ecologies - the environmental, the conceptual and the social - with an emphasis on alter-economies, in the refusal of private property (3ecologies.org). Her artistic practice explores this transversality - a recent exhibition is entitled *100 Acres* (Richard Saltoun Gallery, London, 2024).

**Wednesday, February 4**

**10:30 – noon: Dr. Minna Re Shin (Music Dept, Vanier College)**

**Revisiting and Reimagining Classical Music Performance: Reflections on the Relationship among Composer, Performer, and Audience**

Through the comparison of two classical music scenarios, pianist Minna Re Shin will help us to explore how the dynamic interplay among the composer, performer, and audience – along with the significant impact of “extramusical” elements of the performance creates a collaborative sensory experience coloured by artistic and cultural context and shapes the overall musical experience and meaning. These shared, embodied processes of interactivity make each performance unique. To illustrate, this session will include live recital presentation of Marjan Mozetich’s Three Pieces for piano solo (1984) and the screening of excerpts from my performance videos Sonate Tableaux (2021) and Sonate des Saisons to observe work in progress.

**1:30p - 3:30pm: Oana Suteu Khintirian, Filmmaker / PhD Candidate (Concordia U.)**

**Revisiting the Idea of the Library as a Repository of Sense and Memory**

Join Ms. Khintirian for a discussion of sense and memory, and how people have engaged in different ways to record our individual and societal memories over time through oral histories, pen, paper, and digital media. She will discuss the changing role of libraries as personal and public spaces of memory through excerpts from her 2022 film, and she will address the role of filmmaker as a recorder of memory. This talk draws upon and extends her research for her NFB/ONF produced film, Beyond Paper / Au dela du paper (2022). (The film can be freely viewed on the NFB website, individually or in our classrooms, as well as on Amazon Prime, in Canada only). **Oana Suteu Khintirian’s** work encompasses films, responsive environments, and installation and media scenography, and her films have screened in film festivals around the world. For over twenty years she collaborated with the National Filmboard of Canada as a director, editor, mentor and consultant.

**Friday, February 6**

**10:00– 12:30p**

**FILM SCREENING *Au dela du paper / Beyond Paper (2022)* by Oana Suteu  
Khintirian (2h15)**

“At a critical moment in the history of the written word, as humanity’s archives migrate to the cloud, one filmmaker goes on a journey around the globe to better understand how she can preserve her own Romanian and Armenian heritage, as well as our collective memory. Blending the intellectual with the poetic, she embarks on a personal quest with universal resonance, navigating the continuum between paper and digital—and reminding us that human knowledge is above all an affair of the soul and the spirit” (ONF/NFB). Khintirian’s subjects and locations include the efforts to preserve one of the oldest existing libraries in Mauritania, the Internet Archive, the library of Jorge Luis Borges, and the university library in Bucharest, Romania.

**2:00 – 4:00pm: Mr. Louis “Tewenhni’tátshon” Delisle, Kahnawà:ke Survival School  
Gyms A, B, and C**

**Lacrosse and Community (an interactive workshop)**

Join us for the history of Lacrosse in the Mohawk community and in Canada and its importance for indigenous people. Louis “Tewenhni’tátshon” Delisle is the principal of Kahnawà:ke Survival School, where he teaches Kanien’kéha (Mohawk language) and incorporates lacrosse into the school activities. He will be joined by 4 KSS lacrosse players to demonstrate aspects of the game and practice. Vanier students will be invited to learn the basics of Lacrosse and there is the possibility to play a mini game. Equipment and instruction will be provided. A life-long lacrosse player, Louis “Tewenhni’tátshon” Delisle has been inducted into the Ontario Lacrosse Hall of Fame (2014) and more recently, the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame (2025).