Ether: an immersive sensory environment that explores the possibilities of sensory perception in outer space

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Drawing inspiration from speculative habitat design, scientific studies, and science fiction, Ether asks questions such as: what does Martian water taste like, what does the layered atmosphere of Venus smell like, and how might a non-terrestrial entity register the elements of the Voyager Golden Record? Using sensory ethnography as a guiding method, this project encourages participants to reflect on their unique sensory experiences and perhaps even imagine a more than human subjectivity.

This research is inspired by immersive multi-modal exhibitions created by Chris Salter and David Howes, such as Displace, a performative sensory environment designed to engage and combine the senses. Drawing on their research creation methods, this project combines visuals, acoustics, aromas, tastes, and tactile sensations to craft a particular sensory atmosphere that participants may find compelling, confounding, or blissfully disorienting. The concluding small group discussions offer participants the opportunity to share their unique experiences in the immersive environment and reflect on how their sensory perception may have been subverted, altered, or ‘reconfigured’ (Howes & Salter 2016).

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