



# Senses and Society

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## THEMATIC GROUP NEWSLETTER

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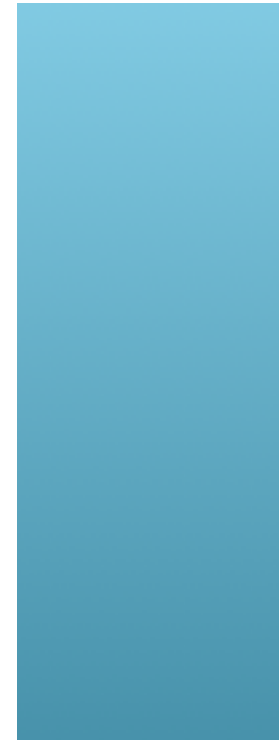
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## Editorial Note

In the Northern hemisphere, the trees are in full blossom. Students are gathering on lawns and across meadows, shaking off their mental cobwebs after exams, and for many of us it feels good to be alive, get out of classrooms and offices, have social gatherings in person. For us academics it is conference season. The collective meadows where we gather are less sun-dappled and green, instead being fluorescent-lit corridors, hotel rooms, and lookalike conference venues with lukewarm coffee pumped out into paper cups. After the streams of cancellations of conferences, symposia, and talks we have endured over the years, including the ISA Forum on Sociology in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2021, it will feel triumphantly good to meet again at ISA World Congress June 25-July 1 in Melbourne, Australia. Before that, another conference of interest to this group, namely the Uncommon Senses conference organized by David Howes in Montreal, took place recently May 2-6. More on both in this newsletter, of course, but the headline is that ‘in-person’ is back, even if ‘hybrid’ is available.

As changes in the natural world become visible, so too in the world of TGO7 there are big changes ahead. The term of current President, Kelvin Low, comes to an end this year. Kelvin was one of the initiators of the Thematic Group within ISA back in 2011, and was manager of the newsletter from the very first issue that year until I took over in Spring 2018. Thank you, Kelvin, for all your work with TGO7! He will continue as a Member, and will officiate with the impending TGO7 elections. The Business Meeting in Melbourne will bring a new President, Vice-President, and maybe Secretary. If you’re interested in any of these positions, please fill in the nomination form (attached to the email), and turn up in person if you’re in Melbourne. Finally, a number of ISA members have books or publishing contributions in this edition (see pp. 6-9), including Kelvin Low, Jean Duruz, and myself. David Howes has two books, and his wife Constance Classen also has an historic reissue of a classic text on the senses. All featured books have links to the publishers’ pages, with codes for discounts in many cases. As usual, do feel free to email me ([paterson@pitt.edu](mailto:paterson@pitt.edu)) with any of your relevant news, publications, or calls for papers.

**Mark Paterson, University of Pittsburgh**  
**Vice-President & Newsletter Editor of TGO7**



TGO7 President  
Associate Professor  
Kelvin Low



William Gibson, one of our members, is putting together an edited collection with a couple of colleagues which might be of interest to the group, and possibly graduate students you are supervising. The full link to the call, with instructions for submission, is [here](#). The co-editors recently decided to extend the deadline for submissions until May 2nd 2023.

***Sensing Life: the social organization of the senses in interaction***

Co-edited by Will Gibson (University College London), Natalia Ruiz-Junco (Auburn University), and Dirk vom Lehn (King's College London)

This edited collection aims to continue the advances in scholarship of the senses as interactional phenomena and experiences. Our aim is to bring together contemporary empirical research that looks at how the senses are used in interaction, showcasing the broad range of concepts and methodologies through which they can be examined.

The proposed volume aims to continue these lines of analysis by inviting contributions from a multiplicity of approaches, including symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, Conversation Analysis, and cognate areas from Discourse Studies and multimodal inquiry. To balance the strong EMCA theme represented in the 2021 special issue we are particularly keen to encourage papers from symbolic interactionism or that use ethnographic methods. We are interested in papers that examine conceptually and empirically the uses of the senses in 'making something happen', which might be in an institutional or non-institutional context.

We welcome tentative expressions of interest and are happy to explore the fit of possible research papers with the above theme.

An abstract of no more than 400 words should be submitted by email to Will Gibson, Natalia Ruiz-Junco, and Dirk vom Lehn ([SensesInteractionism@gmail.com](mailto:SensesInteractionism@gmail.com)) by 2 May 2023.

**Call for Book Chapters: *The Senses and Memory***

**Chanelle Dupuis, a Ph.D. candidate at Brown University, invites book chapters for an edited volume “The Senses and Memory” for Vernon Press.**

In the field of sensory studies, the role of memory in sensory perceptions has always been a central preoccupation. From smell’s “Proust effect” to music’s ability to improve memory and mood, the senses are processed in the brain in particular ways that highlight the strong link between remembering and sensing the world. Likewise, the senses work in tandem, through synesthesia, to evoke feelings and sensations of a past event. The body plays a central role in navigating the world, and the senses provide routes to past, at times forgotten, memories. As sensory studies and memory studies continue to grow and shift as interdisciplinary fields, the overlap between the two demands further investigation. The aim of this edited volume is to dive deeper into the connections that exist between these two fields and to discuss underexplored topics within these areas of study, such as disability in narratives of sensory remembering and the sensory memories of plant and animal life. This volume is searching for creative, interdisciplinary works in the humanities that grapple with topics related to the senses and memory in new, understudied ways.

Questions of importance include: How do the senses evoke memory and convey details of an event? How is sensory memory different from other forms of memory? What is unique about one sense’s ability to evoke memory compared to the other senses? How do new technologies and art reframe the link between the senses and memory? How do mediums (films, texts, paintings, etc.) differ in their portrayal of sensory memory?

Possible topics include, but are not limited to: The senses in arts and media • New technologies • Disability studies • Synesthesia • Nostalgia • Environmental humanities • Animal and plant life • Conflict, violence, memory • Embodiment • Creative approaches to sensory memory

If you are interested in contributing to this edited volume, please submit your proposal (500-700 words abstract) along with a short biography (100-150 words) in PDF format by August 1st, 2023 to the book editor, Chanelle Dupuis ([chanelle\\_dupuis@brown.edu](mailto:chanelle_dupuis@brown.edu)).

Proposal acceptance will be notified by September 1st, 2023. Full chapter submissions are to be delivered by February 1st, 2024.



# Conferences

The Uncommon Senses conference is becoming a regular annual event in Montreal, and this year Uncommon Senses IV from 3-6 May is big, with 79 sessions programmed, 3 of which are co-organized by your newsletter editor. Of course, the main event for TGO7 on the immediate horizon is the XX ISA World Congress of Sociology in Melbourne, Australia. The TGO7 Program Coordinators, namely Kelvin Low, Noorman Abdullah, and myself have curated a stream of 5 paper sessions, with several TGO7 members presenting in them:

## **The political life of sensation (Organizer: Kelvin Low)**

The Contours of Sensory Jurisprudence and Urban Sanitation. Kelvin LOW, National University of Singapore, Singapore

Returning to Marseille: Sensing a Different Geo-Political Map of Citizenship and Belonging. Jean DURUZ, University of South Australia; University of Toronto, Culinaria Research Centre

Sense and (museum) Sensibilities. a Study on Affective Practices in Museums. Clara CIRDAN, London School of Economics

A Bumpy Road to Development: The Everyday Politics of Potholes in Hyderabad, India' Sneha ANNAVARAPU, Singapore

## **Excursions in Sensory Studies: Teaching, Doing, Writing (Organizer: Noorman Abdullah)**

On Resonance and the Sensory: Teaching and Pedagogical Interventions. Noorman ABDULLAH, National University of Singapore

Sensing the Field: Exercising Sensory Ethnography As a Learning By Doing Approach in Graduate Fieldwork Training. Catherine EARL, RMIT Vietnam

Sarva Mangalam! an Exemplar of Practice-Based Research in the Academy. Nicholas COPE, RMIT University Vietnam

Making Sense with Senses. Reflections from a Sensory Workshop. Olga Alejandra SABIDO RAMOS, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Mexico

## **Experiencing Silence and Expanded Time; Other Sensory Pathways and Knowledge (Organizers: Florence Figols, Rita Castro)**

"Listening" As a Metaphor for Synesthetic Attention. Sarah MASLEN, University of Canberra, Australia

Research Outside of Time: Contacting Our inside World through Poetry. Vicki KELLEHER, University of Tasmania, Australia

Writing a Multisensorial Field. Ayesha MUALLA, Shiv Nadar University, India

Transmediating Race and Senses through Subtitling in Translanguaging Classroom. Ayaka YOSHIMIZU and Saori HOSHI, University of British Columbia, Canada

## **The Sense of Data and the Data of Sense: Bodies, Technologies, Spaces (Organizer: Mark Paterson)**

Atmoculture and New Algorithmic Urban Mobilities. Andrea BRIGHENTI, University of Trento, Italy, Italy and Andrea PAVONI, ISCTE-IUL, Portugal

The Future of Touch in Human-Robot Interactions. Mark PATERSON, University of Pittsburgh

Senses of/in the City: A Speculative and Conceptual Exploration of Sensory Spaces of Play in the Digital City. Alexia MADDOX, Naomi SMITH, Jacinthe FLORE and Luke HEEMSBERGEN, RMIT University,, University of the Sunshine Coast, Deakin University, Australia

Self-Tracking and Cyberattacking: Social Media Reactions to Garmin's Ransom. Ben LYALL, Monash University, Australia

## **Translating Sensory Experience (Organizers: Catherine Earl, Andrew Stiff, Thierry Bernard)**

Reflections on an Interdisciplinary Conference As a Sensory Experience. Lea ZENTGRAF, Heidelberg University, Germany, Lina HANSEN, Konzeptwerk Leipzig, Germany and Ronja SCHROEDER, Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg, Germany

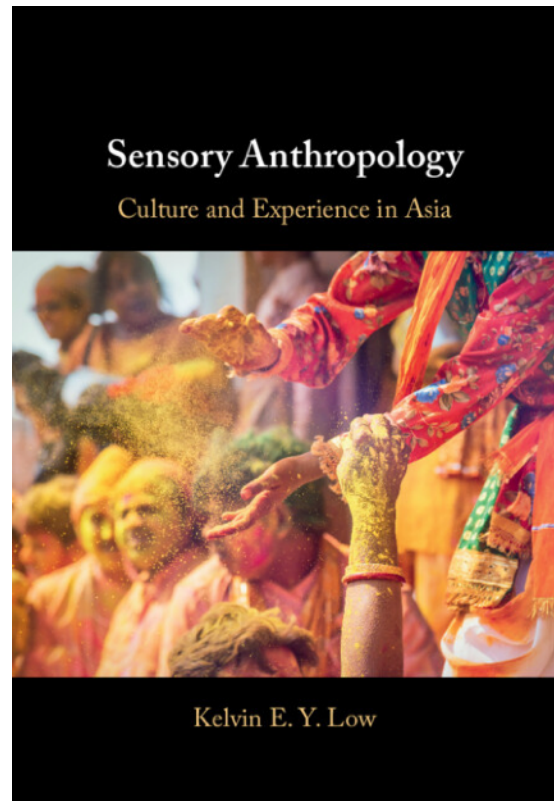
Sensory Focused Moving Image Practice: Methods for Challenging an Agenda of Rapid Modernisation in Hcmc. Andrew STIFF, RMIT Vietnam, Vietnam

Writing Sensations: A Practice Based Approach to Unsettling Anthropology and Ethnographic Writing. Catherine EARL, RMIT Vietnam, Vietnam

***Sensory Anthropology: Culture and Experience in Asia.* Cambridge University Press. [Link](#).**

Kelvin E. Y. Low, National University of Singapore

From constructions of rasa (taste) in pre-colonial India and Indonesia, children and sensory discipline within the monastic orders of the Edo period of Japan, to sound expressives among the Semai in Peninsular Malaysia, the sensory soteriology of Tibetan Buddhism, and sensory warscapes of WWII, this book analyses how sensory cultures in Asia frame social order and disorder. Illustrated with a wide range of fascinating examples, it explores key anthropological themes, such as culture and language, food and foodways, morality, transnationalism and violence, and provides granular analyses on sensory relations, sensory pairings, and intersensoriality. By offering rich ethnographic perspectives on inter- and intra-regional sense relations, the book engages with a variety of sensory models, and moves beyond narrower sensory regimes bounded by group, nation or temporality. A pioneering exploration of the senses in and out of Asia, it is essential reading for academic researchers and students in social and cultural anthropology.

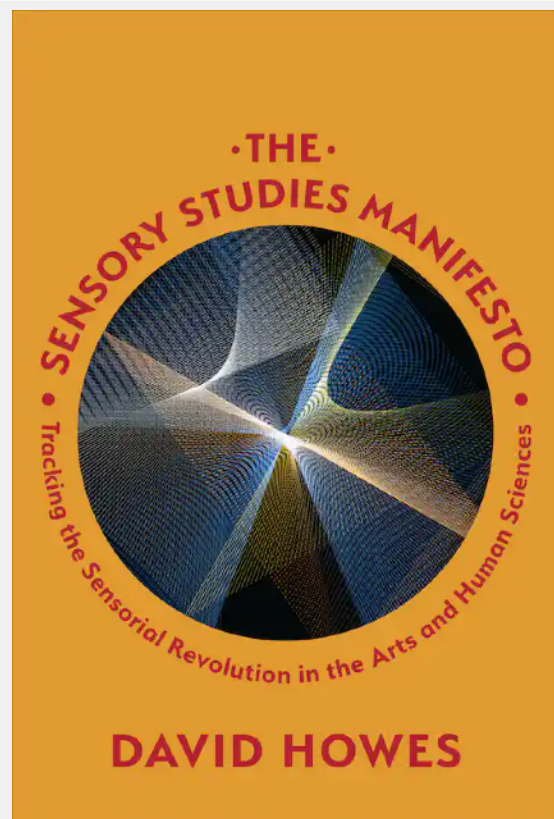


***The Sensory Studies Manifesto: Tracking the Sensorial Revolution in the Arts and Human Sciences.* University of Toronto Press. [Link](#).**

David Howes, Concordia University Montreal

The senses are made, not given. This revolutionary realization has come as of late to inform research across the social sciences and humanities, and is currently inspiring groundbreaking experimentation in the world of art and design, where the focus is now on mixing and manipulating the senses.

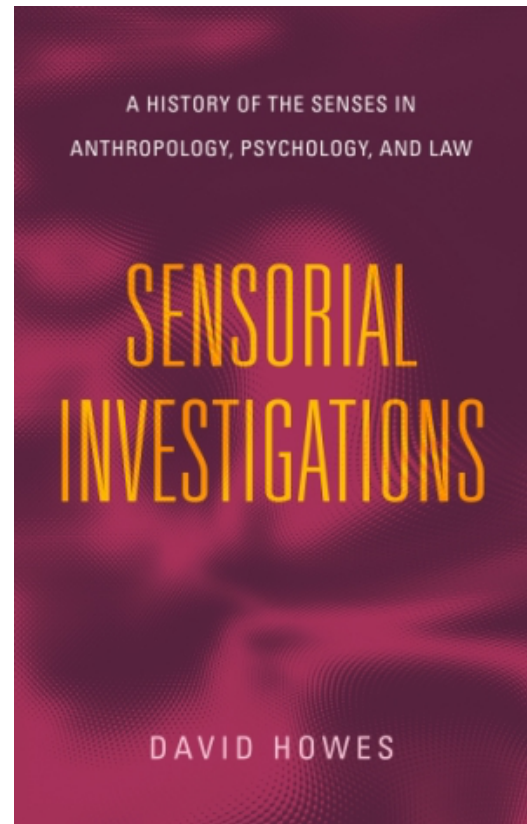
The Sensory Studies Manifesto tracks these transformations and opens multiple lines of investigation into the diverse ways in which human beings sense and make sense of the world. This unique volume treats the human sensorium as a dynamic whole that is best approached from historical, anthropological, geographic, and sociological perspectives. In doing so, it has altered our understanding of sense perception by directing attention to the sociality of sensation and the cultural mediation of sense experience and expression.



***Sensorial Investigations: A History of the Senses in Anthropology, Psychology, and Law.*** [Link.](#)

David Howes, Concordia University Montreal

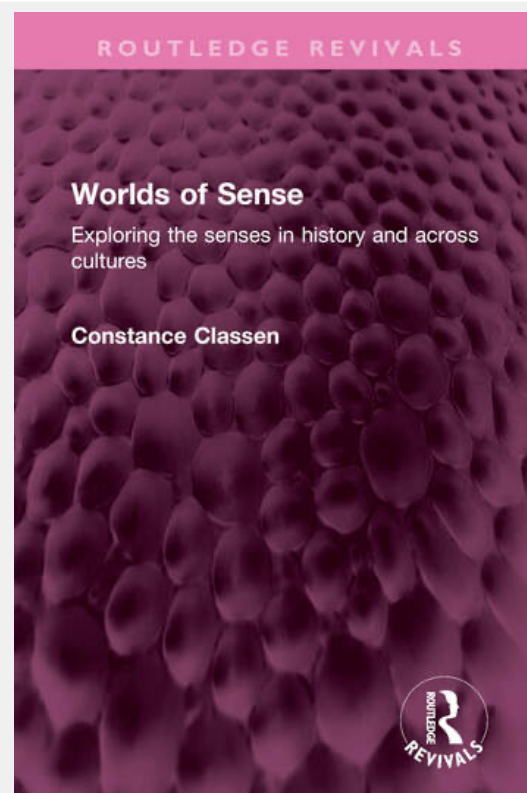
David Howes's sweeping history of the senses in the disciplines of anthropology and psychology and in the field of law lays the foundations for a sensational jurisprudence, or a way to do justice to and by the senses of other people. In part 1, Howes demonstrates how sensory ethnography has yielded alternative insights into how the senses function and argues convincingly that each culture should be approached on its own sensory terms. Part 2 documents how the senses have been disciplined psychologically within the Western tradition, starting with Aristotle and moving through the rise of Lockean empiricism and cognitive neuroscience. Here, Howes presents an anthropologically informed critique of experimental and cognitive psychology, sensory science, and phenomenology. In part 3, he introduces the paradigm of the "historical anthropology of the senses and sensation" and applies it to the analysis of trade relations between Europe and China in the early modern period, to the treaty-making process in North America during the colonial period, and to all the unresolved disputes over land rights and Indigenous sovereignty that continue to this day, arguing that these differences are rooted in a cultural clash of sensoria.



***Worlds of Sense: Exploring the senses in history and across cultures.*** [Link.](#)

Constance Classen, Concordia University Montreal

New edition for 2023! First published in 1993, *Worlds of Sense* is an exploration of the historical and cultural formation of the senses. As the author demonstrates, different cultures have strikingly different ways of 'making sense' of the world. In the modern urban West, we are accustomed to thinking in terms of visual models such as 'world view,' whereas the Ongee of the Andaman Islands, for example, live in a world ordered by smell and the Tzotzil of Mexico hold that temperature is the basic force of the cosmos. In a fascinating examination of the role of the senses in diverse societies and eras, Constance Classen shows the extent to which perception is shaped by and expressive of cultural values. This book will be of interest to students of cultural studies, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy.

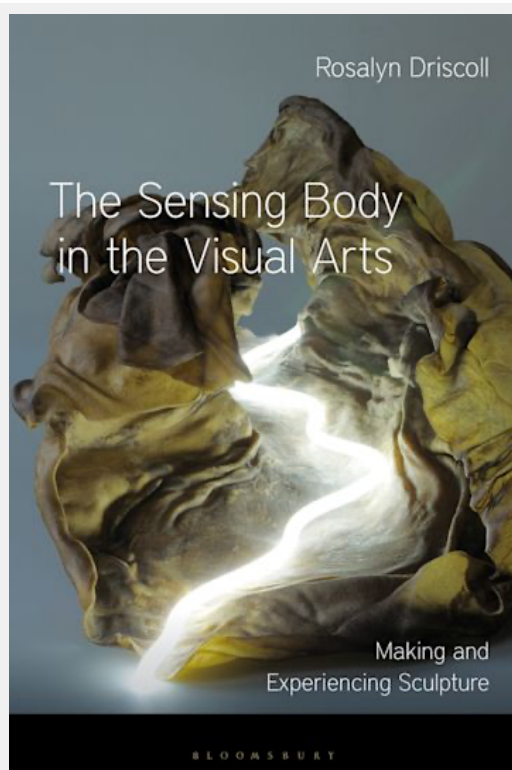




***Horn, or The Counterside of Media.* Transl. Nils F. Schott. Duke University Press. [Link](#)**  
Henning Schmidgen, Bauhaus Univeriteit

(I have reviewed this for *Technology and Culture* recently, so look out for that. It is a well-written manifesto about tactile media and technology.)

We regularly touch and handle media devices. At the same time, media devices such as body scanners, car seat pressure sensors, and smart phones scan and touch us. In *Horn*, Henning Schmidgen reflects on the bidirectional nature of touch and the ways in which surfaces constitute sites of mediation between interior and exterior. Schmidgen uses the concept of "horn"—whether manifested as a rhinoceros horn or a musical instrument—to stand for both natural substances and artificial objects as spaces of tactility. He enters into creative dialogue with artists, scientists, and philosophers, ranging from Salvador Dalí, William Kentridge, and Rebecca Horn to Sigmund Freud, Walter Benjamin, and Marshall McLuhan, who plumb the complex interplay between tactility and technological and biological surfaces. Whether analyzing how Dalí conceived of images as tactile entities during his “rhinoceros phase” or examining the problem of tactility in Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49*, Schmidgen reconfigures understandings of the dynamic phenomena of touch in media.

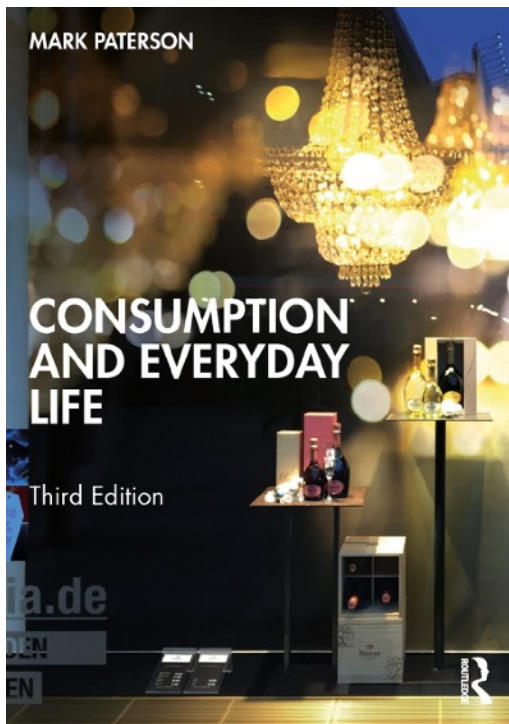


***The Sensing Body in the Visual Arts: Making and Experiencing Sculpture.* Bloomsbury. [Link](#)**  
Rosalyn Driscoll, independent artist and curator

This book provides original grounds for integrating the bodily, somatic senses into our understanding of how we make and engage with visual art. Rosalyn Driscoll, a visual artist who spent years making tactile, haptic sculpture, shows how touch can deepen what we know through seeing, and even serve as a genuine alternative to sight.

Driscoll explores the basic elements of the somatic senses, investigating the differences between touch and sight, the reciprocal nature of touch, and the centrality of motion and emotion. Awareness of the somatic senses offers rich aesthetic and perceptual possibilities for art making and appreciation, which will be of use for students of fine art, museum studies, art history and sensory studies.



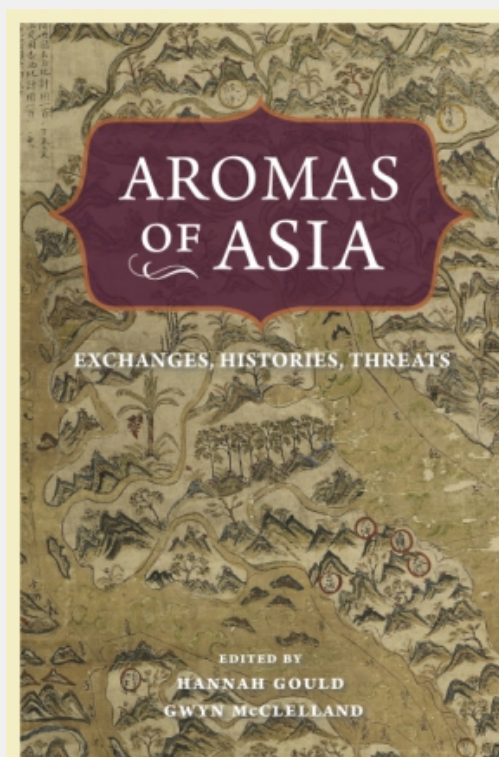


***Consumption and Everyday Life. 3rd Edition.*** Routledge. [Link](#)

Mark Paterson, University of Pittsburgh

This third revised and expanded edition is a major update of the text of the second edition, adding new chapters on youth culture and consumption, retail psychology and the senses, gender and consumption, the globalization of food, and digital consumption and platform capitalism. With an emphasis on everyday life, this text offers a lively and perceptive account of the key theories and ideas which dominate the field of consumption and consumer culture.

Theoretical perspectives are introduced such as theories of practice, critical theory, semiotics, and psychoanalysis. Examples from film, literature, and television are used to illustrate concepts and trends in consumption, and a wide range of engaging and up-to-date case studies of consumption are employed throughout. Historical context is provided to help the reader understand how we became consumers in the first place. Written by an experienced teacher, the book offers an accessible and thought-provoking introduction to the concept of consumption for students in sociology, cultural studies, human geography, history, anthropology, and social psychology.



***Aromas of Asia: Exchanges, Histories, Threats.*** Penn State University Press. [Link](#)

Edited by Hannah Gould (University of Melbourne) and Gwyn McClelland (University of New England, Australia)

Featuring contributions from international scholars with deep knowledge of the region, this volume conceptualizes Asia and its borders as a dynamic, transnationally connected space of olfactory exchange. Using examples like economic exchange along the Silk Road; the diffusion of dharmic religious traditions out of South Asia; the waves of invasion, colonization, and forced relocation that shaped the history of the continent; and other “sensory highways” of contact, the contributors break down essentializing olfactory tropes and reveal how scent functions as a category of social and moral boundary-marking and boundary-breaching within, between, and beyond Asian societies. Smell shapes individual, collective, and state-based memory, as well as discourses about heritage and power. As such, it suggests a pervasive and powerful intimacy that contributes to our understanding of the human condition, mobility, and interconnection.

In addition to the editors, the contributors to this volume include Khoo Gaik Cheng, Jean Duruz, Qian Jia, Shivani Kapoor, Adam Liebman, Lorenzo Marinucci, Peter Romaskiewicz, Saki Tanada, Aubrey Tang, and Ruth E. Toulson.