

International Media Art Festival CYFEST 17

Curatorial Concept

Natura Naturans: Human Beings, Nature, Landscape

The project explores the deep and complex relationship between human beings and nature, understood not as a static or contemplative entity, but as a dynamic and creative force: *Natura Naturans*. Through a range of artistic media, the exhibition considers how we perceive, interact with, and are reflected in the natural landscape — not as external observers, but as participants within an ongoing process of transformation.

At the Cafesjian Center for the Arts, these ideas take on a distinct spatial dimension through the architecture of the Cascade. Its vertical movement, shifting viewpoints, natural light, and constant passage between interior and exterior continually reshape the way the space is perceived. Light here is never neutral: it conditions what can be seen, how surfaces appear, and how the city and surrounding landscape enter the experience of the building. The legacy of Gerard L. Cafesjian is also present through the Center's exhibitions and significant works from the Cafesjian Art Trust, creating a layered context in which contemporary art, architecture, and collection meet. Within this setting, moving through the Cascade becomes part of experiencing *Natura Naturans* itself.

The impulse to cross the boundaries between artistic disciplines has a long history. At the beginning of the twentieth century, artists and thinkers such as Alexander Scriabin, Mikalojus Čiurlionis, Leon Theremin, and Sergei Eisenstein explored new relationships between sound, image, movement, technology, and perception. Within this broader field of experimentation, Mikhail Matyushin and the Organic School developed a particular interest in color, light, space, movement, and the expansion of visual perception, treating seeing itself as an active and embodied process shaped by the surrounding environment. Earlier theoretical approaches, including those of Gottfried Semper, had already questioned fixed distinctions between artistic media and forms.

In the twenty-first century, sound, light, creative coding, robotics, sensors, and digital systems can coexist with traditional artistic media within a single work. In this sense, contemporary media art does not simply break with earlier experiments in perception; it gives artists new means to work with light, movement, invisible signals, spatial experience, and forms of sensory attention that were already central to the Organic School. Historical distance does not necessarily separate these experiments. As Jorge Luis Borges observed, "If the text is good, it makes no difference whether it was written this morning or about 20 centuries ago, or if it is still to be written." Ideas can move across time, acquiring new materials, technologies, and

contexts while continuing to address fundamental questions of perception, imagination, and our place in the world.

A nomadic community of artists, curators, engineers, programmers, media activists, and theoreticians, CYLAND MediaArtLab and CYFEST have made it their mission to develop dialogue between artists and engineers; educate people on how to use creative technology; attract artists, audiences, and attention to the New Media. New media are approached not simply as tools, but as ways of sensing, interpreting, and reconfiguring reality — making visible or audible processes that might otherwise remain inaccessible to human perception. Rather than treating these realms as opposites, the exhibition focuses on the relationships, dependencies, and transformations that connect them. Through art, it seeks to encourage an open and profound dialogue leading to a more mature and responsible understanding of our role in the great ecosystem of life.

Presented at the Cafesjian Center for the Arts, CYFEST 17 and the exhibition Natura Naturans connect this international dialogue in media art with Yerevan's cultural and urban setting. In the context of the Cascade's architecture, the Center's collection, and the surrounding landscape, the exhibition invites visitors to look anew at familiar surroundings and reconsider the relationships between nature, technology, and human experience.

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