From Sensation to Synesthesia: 
The aesthetic experience and synestesia in film and new media.

The work of art was defined by Deleuze and Guattari as a block of sensations. The aesthetic fruition actually manages to involve the cooperation of two or more senses, and evokes multiple sensations in the subject. This mechanism is known as synesthesia. This concept has been developed by artists since the end of 19th century.

Nowadays neuroscientists argue that synesthesia is a perceptive tendency some people can experience. Some perceptual stimuli involve a simultaneous activation of different brain areas that allow the subject to perceive several sensations at the same time. The neural networks underpinning synesthetic perception enable cognitive and emotional processes of the aesthetic fruition. The recent discovery of mirror neurons (Rizzolatti et al., 1996) dramatically proved the main role of the empathy and of the intersubjective experience.

These elements can be easily connected to the current media landscape and how it works. The convergence culture deeply modified media by using new technologies and new ways of production. Cinema and new media practices aim at intensifying visual, auditory and tactile stimuli. They create audiovisual works of art joining movement-images, sounds and environment in order to evoke synesthetic mechanisms. This approach overcomes the figurative paradigm grounded on the visual and auditory predominance. So the role of the body becomes crucial in the artistic experience; according to Shaviro, the cinematic experience becomes embodied because of the continuity between the physiologic and affective reactions of the body. Moreover, Sobchack deals with the carnal identification and Marks talks about aptic perception. They both were inspired by Lacan’s theories and Merleau Ponty’s phenomenology. Nevertheless, some neuroscientists such as Varela and Gallese have given rise to a fruitful dialogue between phenomenology and neurosciences perspectives and it keeps alive the debate on naturalizing the aesthetic experience on the basis of cognitive sciences.

The creation of synesthetic effects into cinematic texts was already experienced by early cinema (so-called "cinema of attractions") and Avant-garde that worked on the audience involvement through live music and sound, applied colour and cutting techniques, engaging spectators by showing catalogues of images-events. These techniques recall the ones used by some post-modern forms of cinema, too, through the massive use of digital effects. It implies the transition from the only scopic drive to the immersive experience of the sensation-image (Jullier) that involves the whole body.
This workshop aims at elucidating how cinema and new media products can be considered synesthetic machines. The idea is to develop and share a study in deep on the relationship between media and the synesthetic engagement, and discourses on Philosophy, Neurosciences and Neuroaesthetic of the cinematic experience will be welcome. The workshop will encourage deepening media theories towards a discussion that involves both new media and film.

We solicit papers that consider, combine or supplement any of the following suggestive (rather than prescriptive) topics:

- Aesthetics and perception through the audiovisual media;
- Neuroscience and cinema: sensations, emotions and human brain;
- Spectator’s engagement: brain & body in film and new media;
- Hybrid media and hybrid perception;
- Media archaeology and immersive synesthesia;
- Digital technologies and the "expanded" experience.

Please address abstracts (300-500 words) along with institutional affiliation and short bio to: graduates@necs.org

**Deadline for submission: 15 December 2014.** Notification will follow shortly thereafter.

The workshop language is English.

Sapienza University will not provide refunds: participants will cover their own travel and accommodation expenses. Workshop attendance is free, but valid NECS-membership is required to participate.

**Organizers:** Rossella Catanese, Francesca Scotto Lavina, Valentina Valente (Sapienza University Rome)