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November 2017

**THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY ANNOUNCES
THE NEW EXHIBITION *OUR SENSES: AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE***

SERIES OF INTERACTIVE GALLERIES REVEAL HOW OUR BRAINS MAKE SENSE OF THE WORLD

EXHIBITION OPENS TO MEMBERS ON NOVEMBER 17 AND TO THE PUBLIC ON NOVEMBER 20

Every day, we perceive the world around us through some or all of our senses – including sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste, and balance. Every ring of the alarm clock, whiff of breakfast, or step on a cold tile floor – all are detected by specialized sensory cells that send nerve signals to your brain. But as it turns out, for humans “reality” isn’t ever exactly what it seems to be. In an upcoming highly experiential exhibition at the Museum, funhouse-like spaces will dare visitors to trust their senses – then show how or why what we perceive is not simply what is occurring around us.

Our Senses: An Immersive Experience delves into how our brains, adapted over millennia to help our ancestors survive their environments, work with sensory organs to shape and reframe our perceptions of everyday encounters. And it reveals how until recently in our evolutionary history, humans have been oblivious to nature’s other ubiquitous signals, including UV light, infrared sounds, and electrical fields. With the advent of new technologies, scientists now know those signals are all around us – just not perceptible to us through our senses alone.

Our Senses will let visitors explore eleven interactive galleries designed to test our perceptions. A room with changing lights will reveal a series of different images depending on which light – red, blue, or green – shines at any given moment. Another space – this time in black and white – will let visitors discover what happens when our senses disagree: the eyes will see walls and a floor that appear to curve and ripple but the feet will feel a flat surface

beneath. (Some visitors may feel off balance, but will be able to bypass the gallery if they prefer.)

Other exhibition highlights include a garden that can be explored through the eyes of a bee or a butterfly, revealing what other animals see when they encounter flowering plants; an audio collage challenging visitors to test their skill at tracking individual sounds, a real-time demonstration of how your brain's primary task is to sort through the stimulating world around you and select the right information on which to focus your attention; and a variety of experiences that showcase how our brains are wired to prioritize certain signals and focus on particular cues and details, such as movement or human faces. A smell test will invite visitors to unpack the fragrance notes in a complex scent, since what we perceive as a particular odor is actually a symphony of smells. A section on attention will focus on how seemingly unrelated information can shape what you see and hear – and how, when focusing on one item, other, obvious items may be missed. Other areas of the exhibition will delve into how our brain works to create our perception of “reality” by filling in gaps, resolving conflicts, correcting errors, and using scraps of information to trigger memories.

In addition, a live presentation will address why our senses are essential to our survival, how the senses and world views of other species differ from ours, and what's truly unique about human perception, including sensory integration, language, art, and music.

Our Senses is curated by Rob DeSalle, a curator in the Museum's Division of Invertebrate Zoology who conducts research at the Sackler Institute for Comparative Genomics and whose recent exhibitions include *Brain: The Inside Story*, which explored how the human brain uses molecular, chemical, and electrical signals to interpret information and learn at every stage of life. *Our Senses* will be open to the public from Monday, November 20, 2017, to Sunday, January 6, 2019. Members will be able to preview the exhibition starting on Friday, November 17, through Sunday, November 19.

Our Senses is generously supported by Dana and Virginia Randt.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY (AMNH.ORG)

The American Museum of Natural History, founded in 1869, is one of the world's preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. The Museum encompasses 45 permanent exhibition halls, including those in the Rose Center for Earth and Space and the

Hayden Planetarium, as well as galleries for temporary exhibitions. It is home to New York State's official memorial to Theodore Roosevelt, a tribute to Roosevelt's enduring legacy of environmental conservation. The Museum's approximately 200 scientists draw on a world-class research collection of more than 34 million artifacts and specimens, some of which are billions of years old, and on one of the largest natural history libraries in the world. Through its Richard Gilder Graduate School, the Museum grants the Ph.D. degree in Comparative Biology and the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree, the only such program at any museum in the United States. Annual physical attendance has grown to approximately 5 million, and the Museum's exhibitions and Space Shows can be seen in venues on six continents. The Museum's website, digital videos, and apps for mobile devices bring its collections, exhibitions, and educational programs to millions more around the world. Visit amnh.org for more information.

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