

Verena Paravel: *Cosmofonia*

December 5, 2026 to May 30, 2027

Press conference

Friday, December 4, 2026, 10 am

Opening

Friday, December 4, 2026, 7 pm



Verena Paravel
Cosmofonia, 2025-2026
Film still
Courtesy the artist

Cosmofonia is an immersive, sensory film project by French anthropologist, filmmaker, and artist Verena Paravel. With this project, Paravel proposes a new genre of documentary film about animals and plants, filmed from their perspective or that of their immediate surroundings. *Cosmofonia* explores the inaudible sounds and voices of the planet, including infrasonic vibrations, seismic noises, codes between different species, and acoustic traces of ecological collapse and survival. For most visitors, these sounds will be heard for the first time; sounds that are not widespread or commonly known, even within scientific circles. Paravel's investigations, made possible by cutting-edge audio-visual technology and guided by her interest in "seeing with the ears," cultivate a new awareness and perception of the natural world. True to her recurring filmic approach, natural environments or ecosystems are never detached from their observers, whether these are scientists or filmmakers. Similarly, the equipment used to capture phenomena such as ant communication remains inseparable from the nearly sublime experience of hearing these sounds. Species communicate, orient themselves, and sustain their lives through acoustic signals. Human-made noise disrupts these essential exchange processes, while the destruction of habitats silences formerly vibrant soundscapes. The conditions of the anthropocene are emphasised through Paravel's insistence on acknowledging the mediation itself—the act of observation or documentation—which extends to the experience of *Cosmofonia* within the museum. This setting underscores both the clinical control and the occurrence of species and natural life that are both inaudible, imperceptible, and unknown to human visitors.

Shown for the first time in its entirety at mumok, the *Cosmofonia* project marks Verena Paravel's first solo exhibition in a museum and comprises several newly produced chapters set in distinct locations and ecosystems, co-produced by the museum. The first chapter of *Cosmofonia* premiered at the Okayama Art Summit in 2025. Set in Japan, this chapter uses advanced scientific video and audio technology to capture the sounds and movements of insects, gastropods, plants, and other species. Paravel's singular visual style shifts perspective constantly between the species and their observers. The second chapter takes place in Camargue in southern France, exploring both wetlands and nature affected by wildfires. Exhibited together, the chapters of *Cosmofonia* offer encounters with perceptions that are usually beyond our reach. The project serves as a reminder of our limitations as humans in grasping the realities around us.

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Verena Paravel (born 1971 in Neuchâtel, Switzerland) lives and works in Paris. A former visiting professor at Harvard University, she is part of the Sensory Ethnography Lab (SEL). Alongside anthropologist and SEL director Lucien Castaing-Taylor, Paravel has made pioneering films such as *Leviathan* (2012), *somniloquies* (2017), *Caniba* (2017), and *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (2022). Paravel's work has been presented at the *Whitney Biennial*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2014); *Greater New York*, MoMA PS1, New York (2016); *documenta 14*, Kassel and Athens (2017); and *Breathing Matter(s)*, silent green, Berlin (2025).

Curated by Fatima Hellberg, Lukas Flygare and Naoko Kaltschmidt