



UK Synaesthesia Association



**UEL**  
University of  
East London

## *Public Lecture @ University of East London*

### **"Synaesthesia as a window into human nature"**

by

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**What** do David Hockney, Richard Feynman, Nabokov, Messiaen and Stevie Wonder all have in common? All these people experience **SYNAESTHESIA**, a "union of the senses" whereby two or more senses that are normally experienced separately are automatically joined together.

For some synaesthetes, listening to music may also cause them to see specific colours (e.g., the key of C-major may be blue), while for others letters or numbers are always tinged a certain colour (e.g., '5' may be green and '6' may be red), or letters and numbers might be associated with personalities. The letter 'A' might be a woman, and 'B' might be her husband or her son!

Although synaesthesia has been known about for more than 125 years, interest in synaesthesia has undergone resurgence in the past decade. Recent research has shown what synaesthetes already know: synaesthesia is real, and synaesthetes are neither telling stories, nor are they "crazy."

Synaesthetes can use their colours to perform better than non-synaesthetes on a number of visual tests and neuroimaging demonstrates increased activity in regions of the brain that are essential for the synaesthetic experiences. We further suggest that understanding synaesthesia may help to unlock some aspects of what makes human beings creative, and how we link any combination of ideas.

While synaesthetes are consciously aware of these links, some of the same mechanisms that are present in synaesthetes are present in all of us, giving certain ideas their sort of "rightness". Concepts might reside in brain maps and metaphorical mappings may involve similar mechanisms.

Thus, far from being a mere curiosity, synaesthesia may provide a window into perception, thought and language.

**Presented by:**

**UEL**  
University of  
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**Date & Time:** Friday March 25th, 2011, 6pm

**Venue:** University of East London,  
Stratford Campus in room CC1.01

For further details contact: [synaesthesia@uel.ac.uk](mailto:synaesthesia@uel.ac.uk)

**This talk is open to all and is free to attend**

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