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Sight, Sound and ... Smell?

BY JON ANDELSON

Words. Images. Sounds. These are what we at *Rootstalk* share with you—our readers, our viewers, our listeners. If you have seen only a hard copy issue of the journal, you have gotten only the writing and the pictures. When we initially imagined creating *Rootstalk*, we envisioned it in a conventional print format. Later, we embraced the on-line format because not only did it allow much less expensive reproduction of images, especially color images (two dimensional art and photography), it also allowed us to add sound, including music, birdsong, and podcasts. True, an on-line presence doesn't offer the tactile experience of holding a paper issue in your hands and turning physical pages, but the sense of touch in that is, frankly, limited.

I suppose the day may come when technology could allow the addition of the sense of smell to publications like *Rootstalk*: you'll be able to see a painting of a flower and be able to smell the flower, or (not as nice) you'll read an article about hog confinements and be able to smell them. This sounds far-fetched, but when I was growing up in Chicago I went to a friend's birthday party at which the main entertainment was going downtown on the "L" to see a movie, "The Scent of Mystery." What makes the experience stick in my mind is that the film was shot (although that's probably not the right word) in "Smell-o-Vision." Little boxes on the back of each seat would, at the appropriate times, release smells that went along with the action in the film: someone eating a peach, a man smoking a pipe, and of course a woman wearing special perfume. (I am not making this up. Google *Smell-o-Vision*.)

And might we someday be able to read in *Rootstalk* about the incessant winds on the prairie and feel them on our cheek, or see a photograph of compass plant and be able to touch the screen and feel its sand-papery leaves? Time will tell. Meanwhile, we hope you enjoy *Rootstalk* using the three senses it can stimulate. And please, if you have words, images, or sounds about the prairie region that you would like to share, consider submitting a piece of content to us. We would like to hear from you. 🌿



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