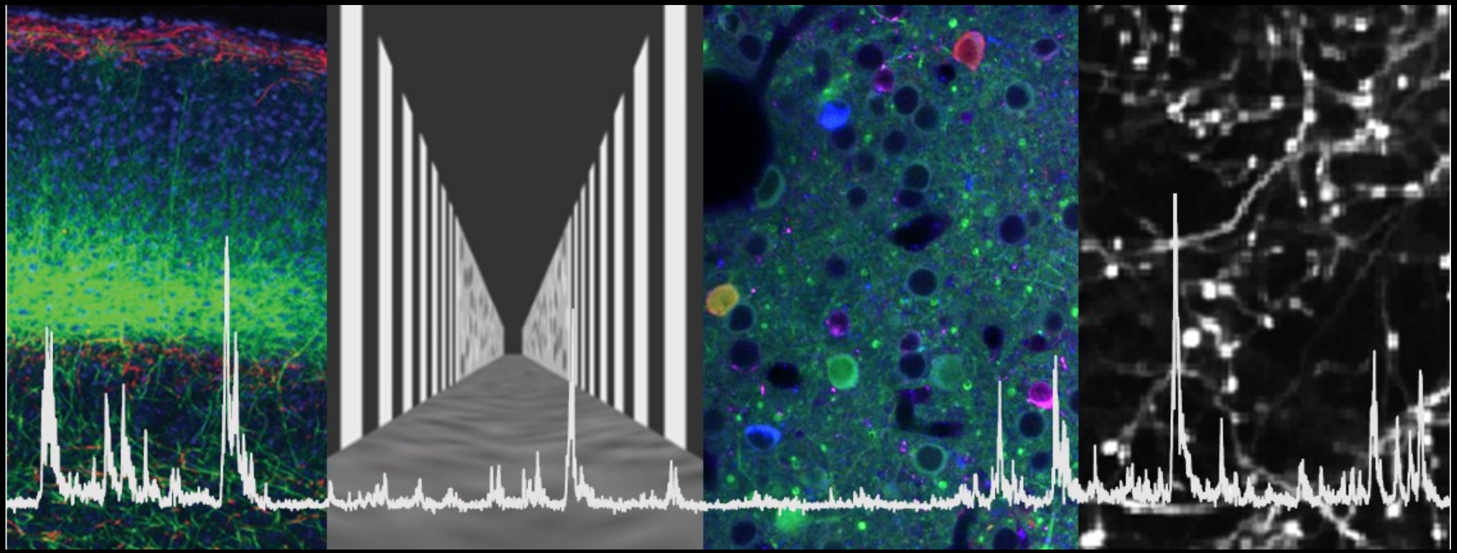
Putting vision into context:

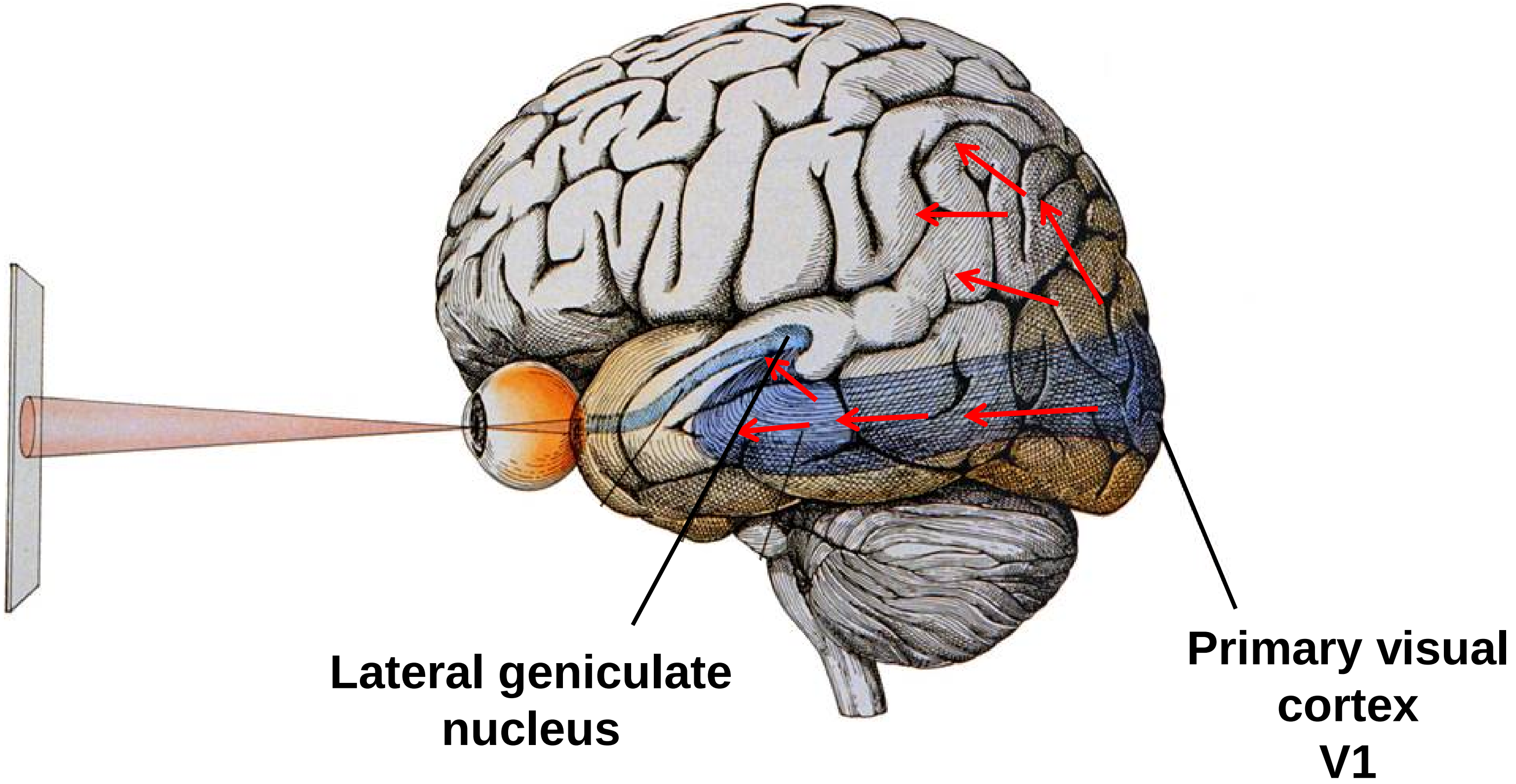
Influence of behaviour and context on sensory processing



Sonja Hofer

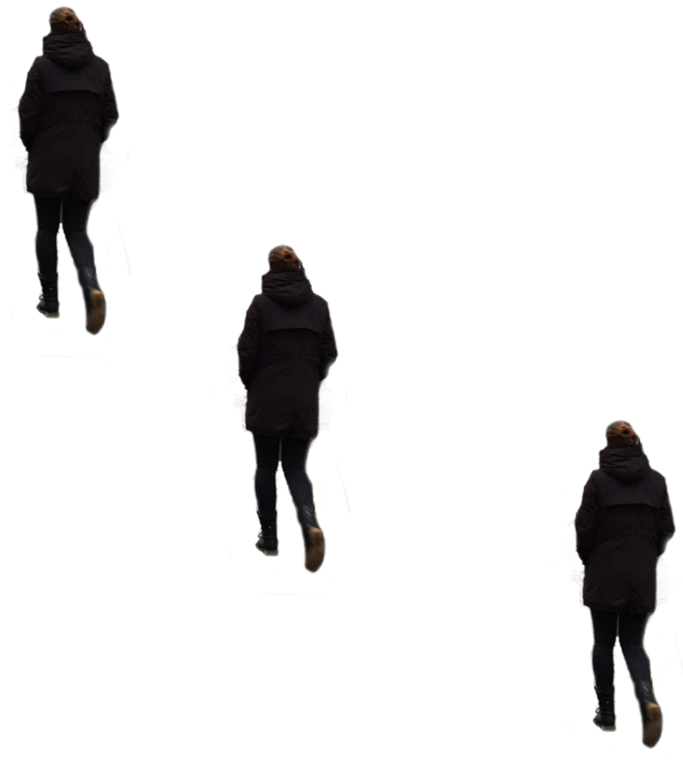
Sensory Systems Module PhD course 26/10/2018

Visual system



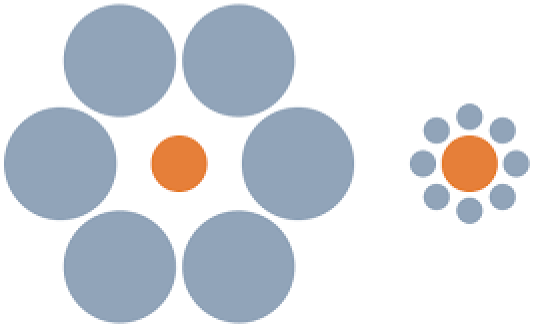
The same stimulus can be perceived differently depending on the context

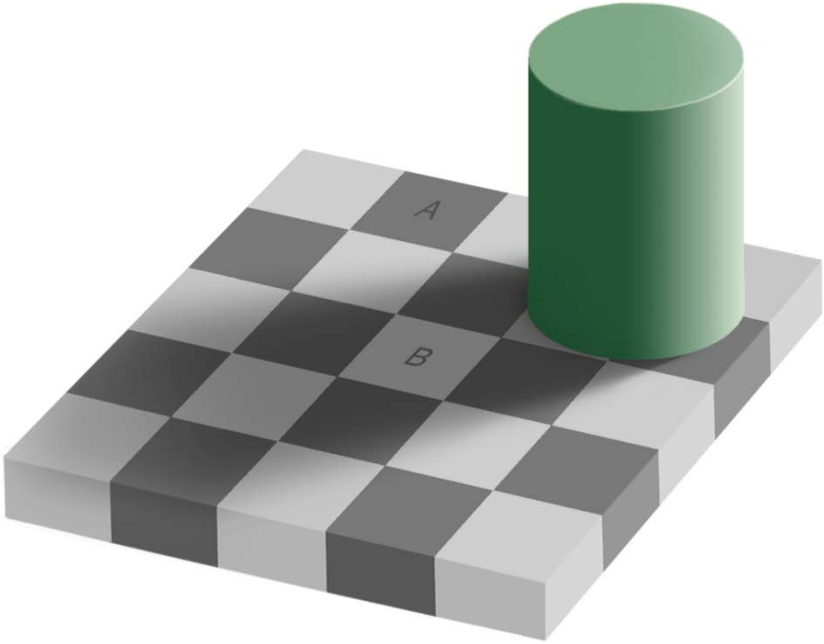
The same stimulus can be perceived differently depending on the context



The same stimulus can be perceived differently depending on the context

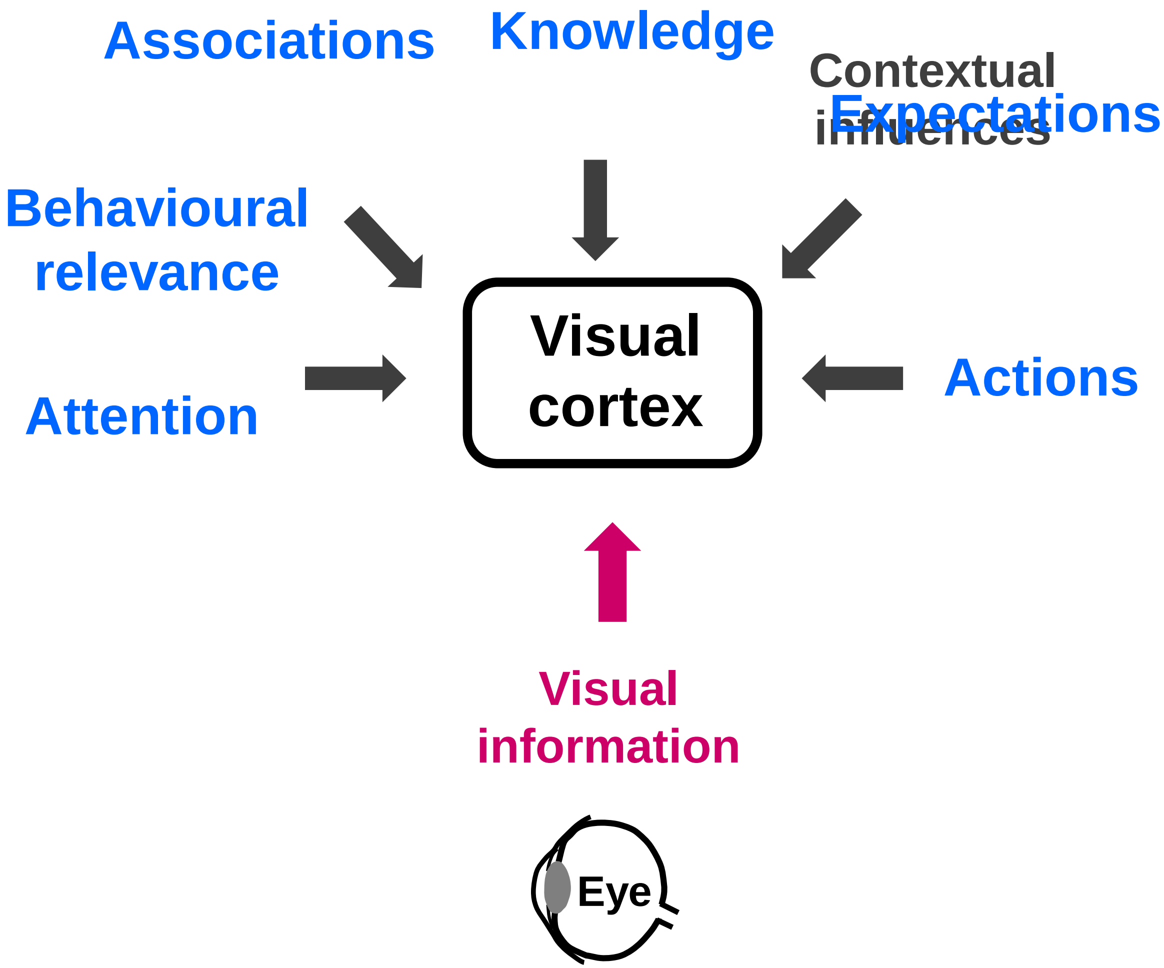
Effect of context on perception:





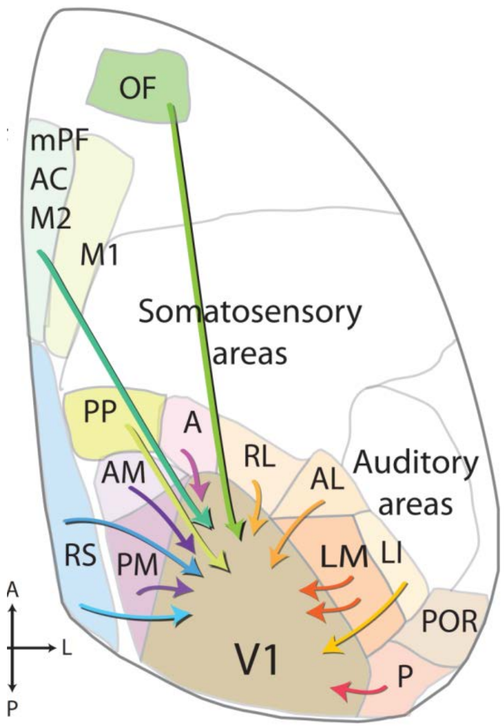
Effect of context on perception:

Integration of sensory and contextual 'top-down' signals

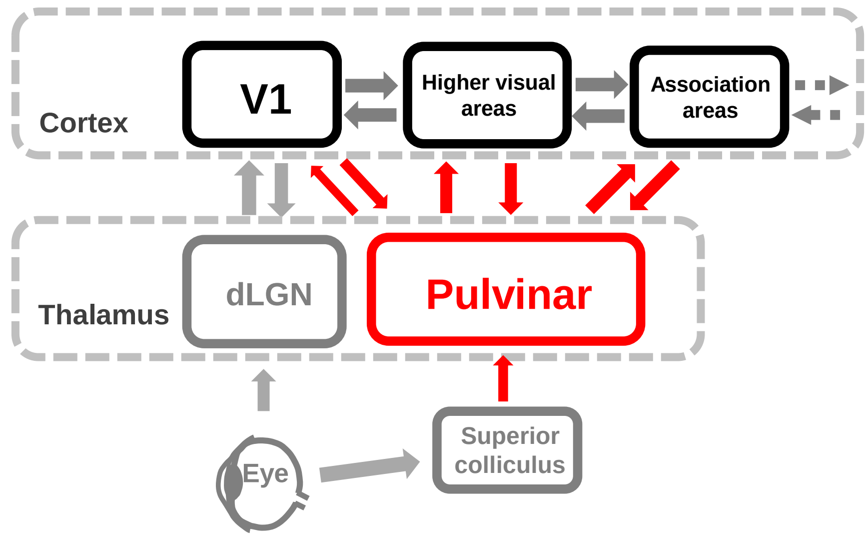


Integration of sensory and contextual ‘top-down’ signals

Top-down cortical inputs



Higher-order thalamic inputs



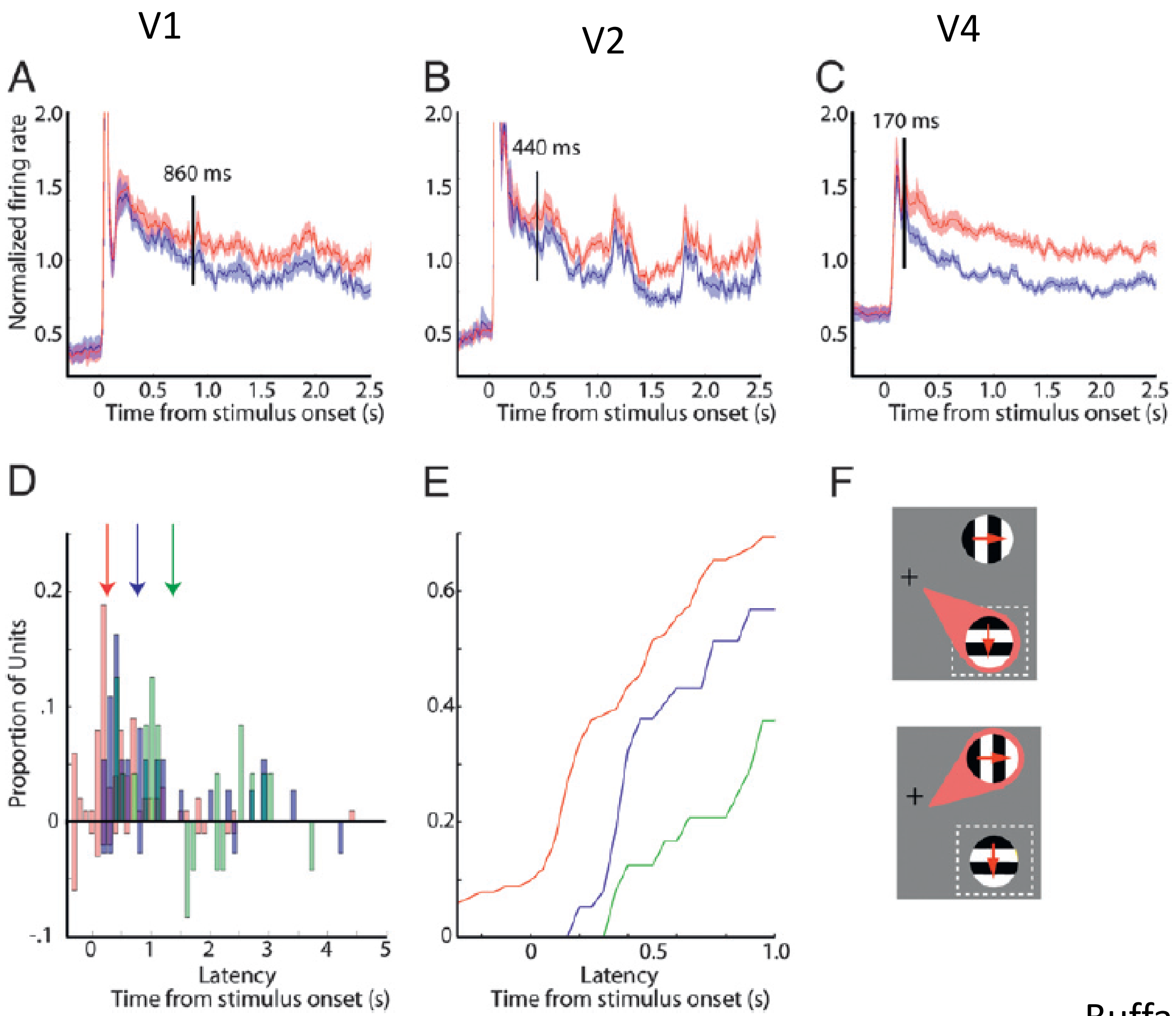
Neuromodulation

Outline

- Neuronal signals related to attention and reward expectation
- Behavioural relevance & Learning
- Motor signals in sensory cortex
- Predictive coding

Modulation of sensory responses by attention

Spatial attention (Top-down)

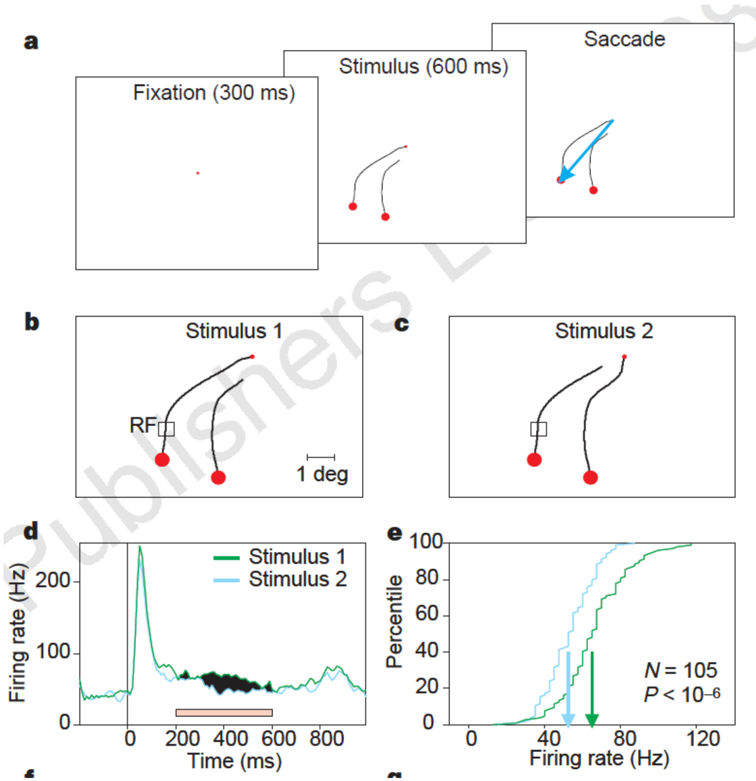


Buffalo et al 2009

Modulation of sensory responses by attention

Object-based attention

Curve-tracing task

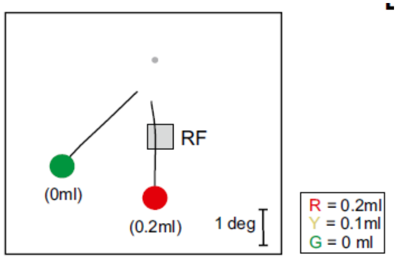


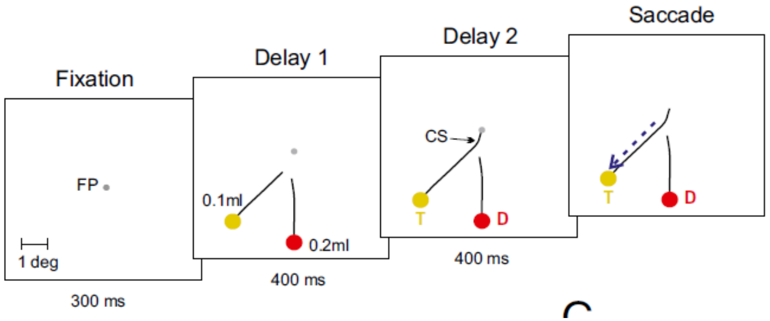
Roelfsema et al 1998

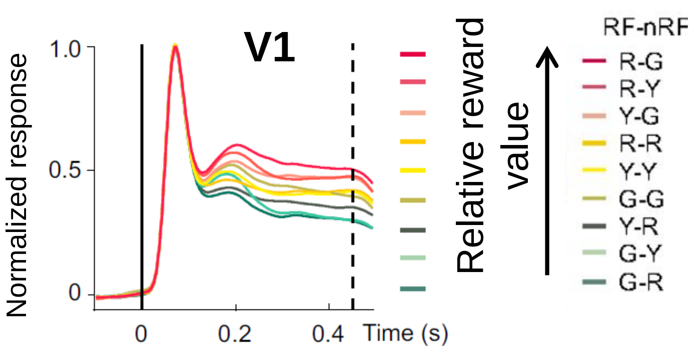
Modulation of sensory responses by reward expectation

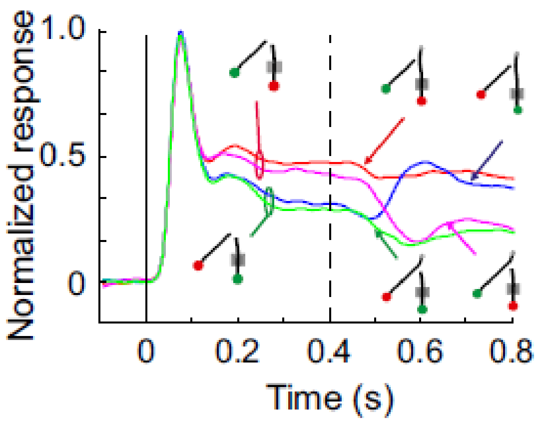
Attention or reward expectation?

Adapted curve-tracing task







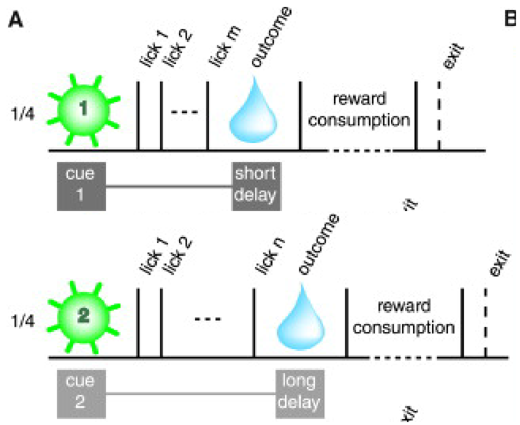


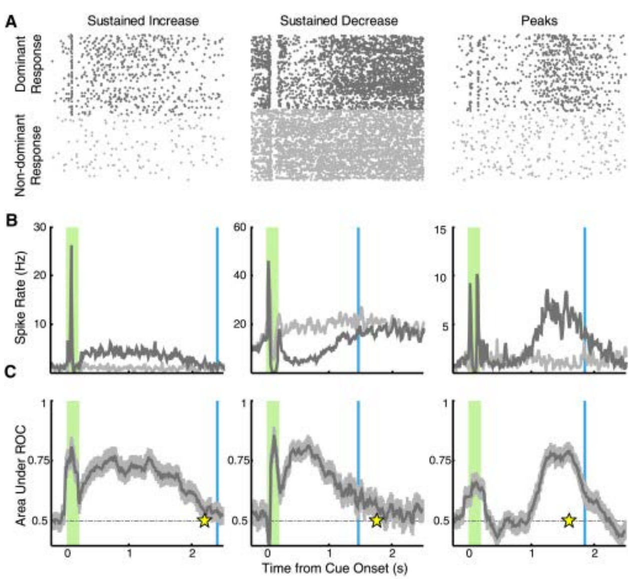
Stănişor et al, 2013

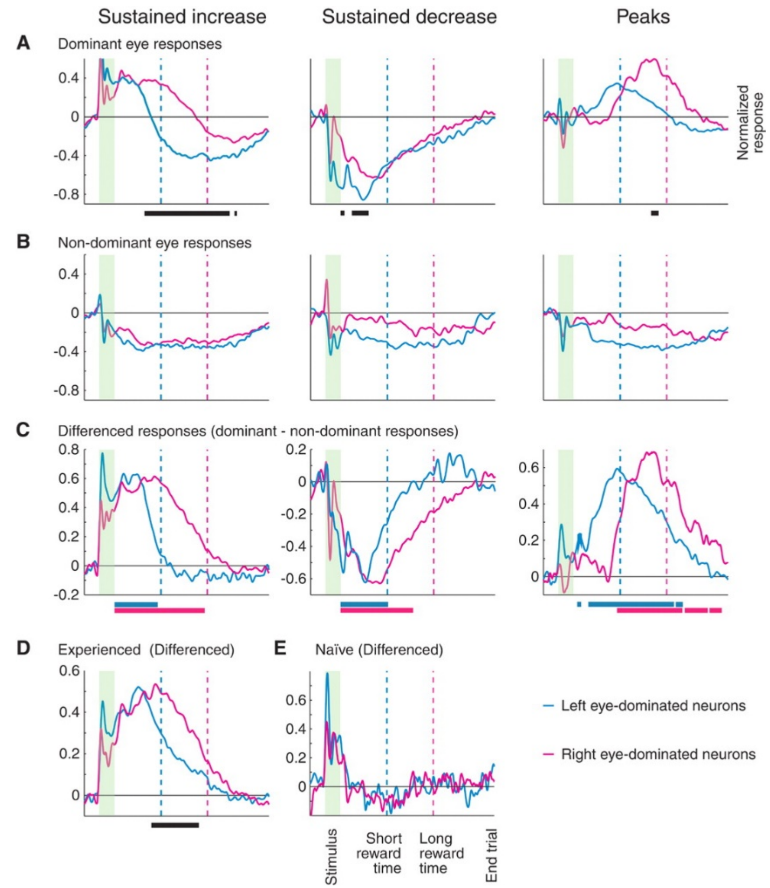
Modulation of sensory responses by reward expectation

Neuronal signals in V1 related to reward timing (or motor signals?)

Flash to left or right eye:







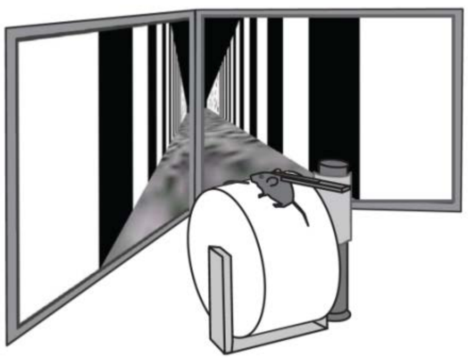
Shuler & Bear, 2006
Shubykin et al, 2013

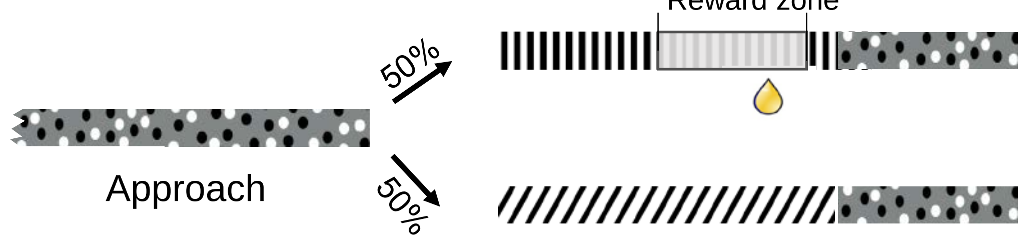
Changes of sensory responses during learning

How do responses to visual stimuli change as they become behaviourally relevant to an animal?

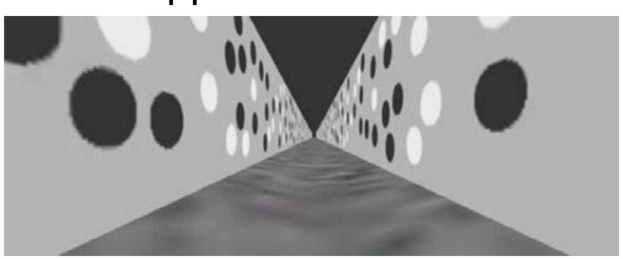
Changes of sensory responses during learning

Visual discrimination task in virtual reality

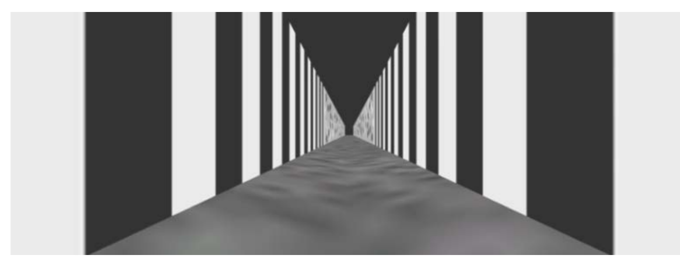




Approach corridor



Grating corridors



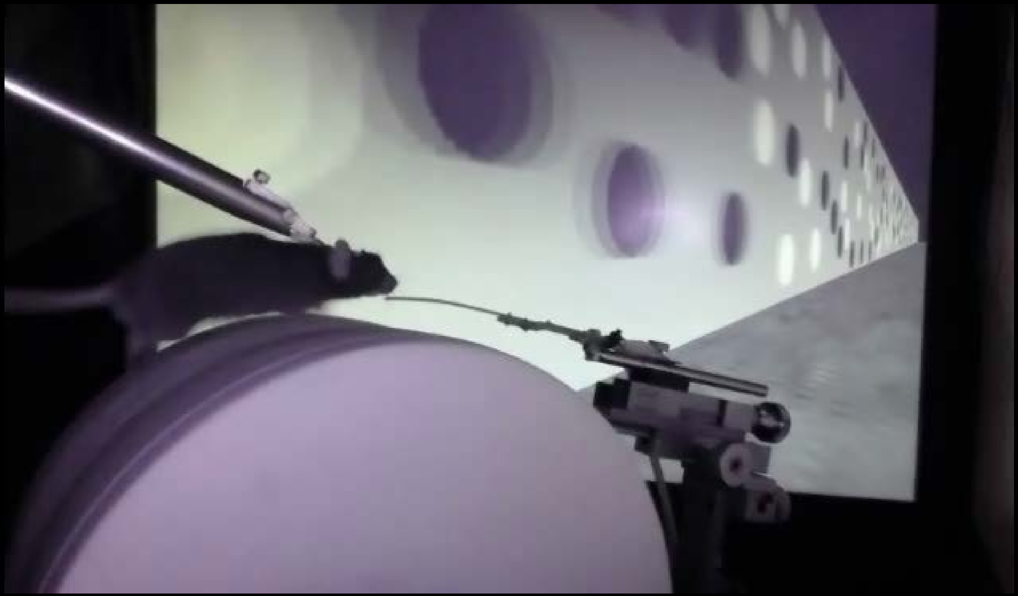
<u>Vertical</u>:
rewarded
(drop of soya milk)

<u>Angled</u> (40°):
non-rewarded

Adil Khan

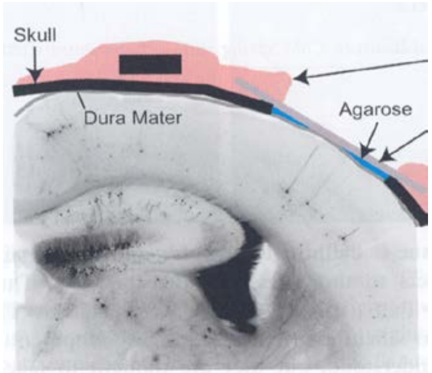
Trained mouse performing the task

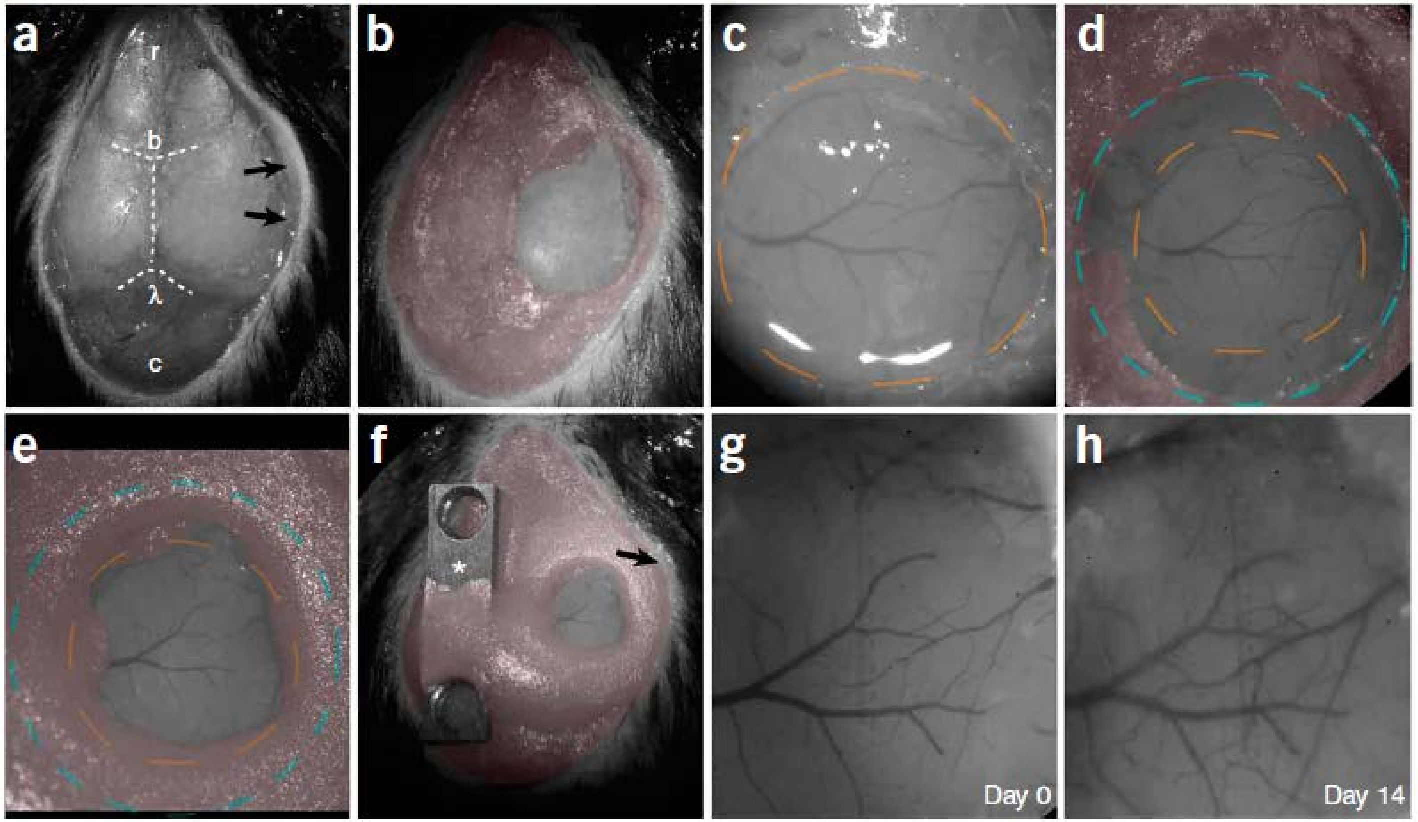
Head-fixed mouse on a cylinder,
running through a virtual corridor
(only half of virtual reality visible)



Access to the cortex for chronic recordings

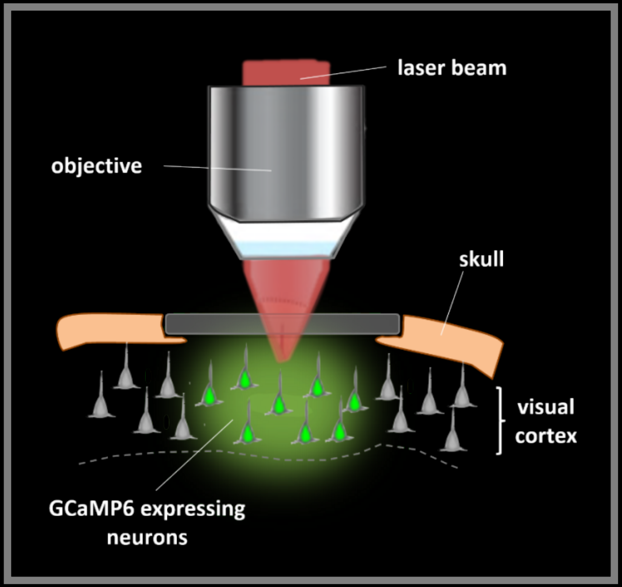
Implantation of a chronic cranial window:



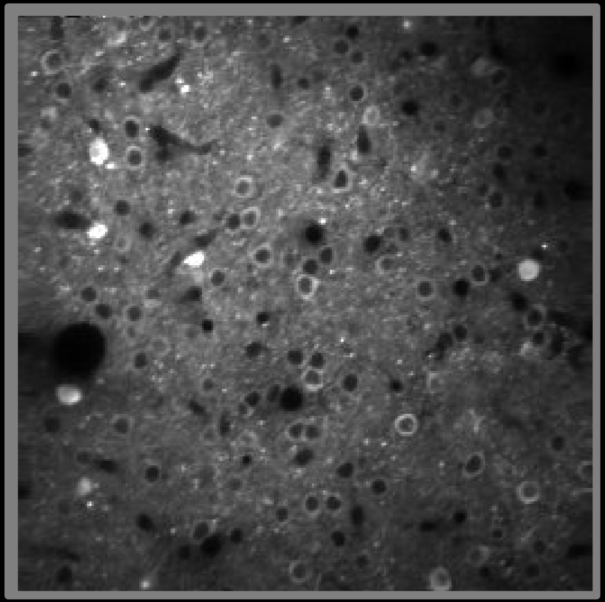


Holtmaat et al., 2009

Two-photon calcium imaging of GCaMP calcium indicators



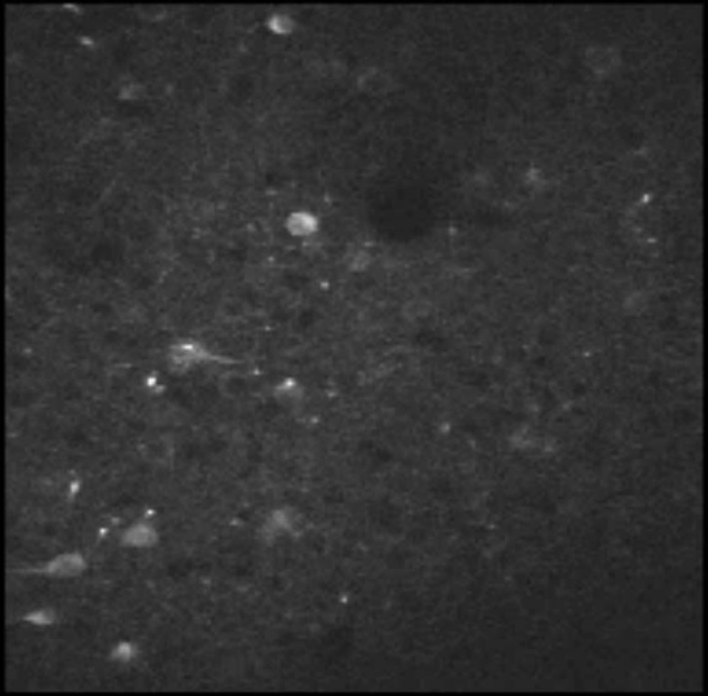
GCaMP6-expressing neurons in visual cortex (V1)



In vivo two-photon calcium imaging during the discrimination task

Trained mouse performing the task

Neurons in visual cortex expressing GCaMP6

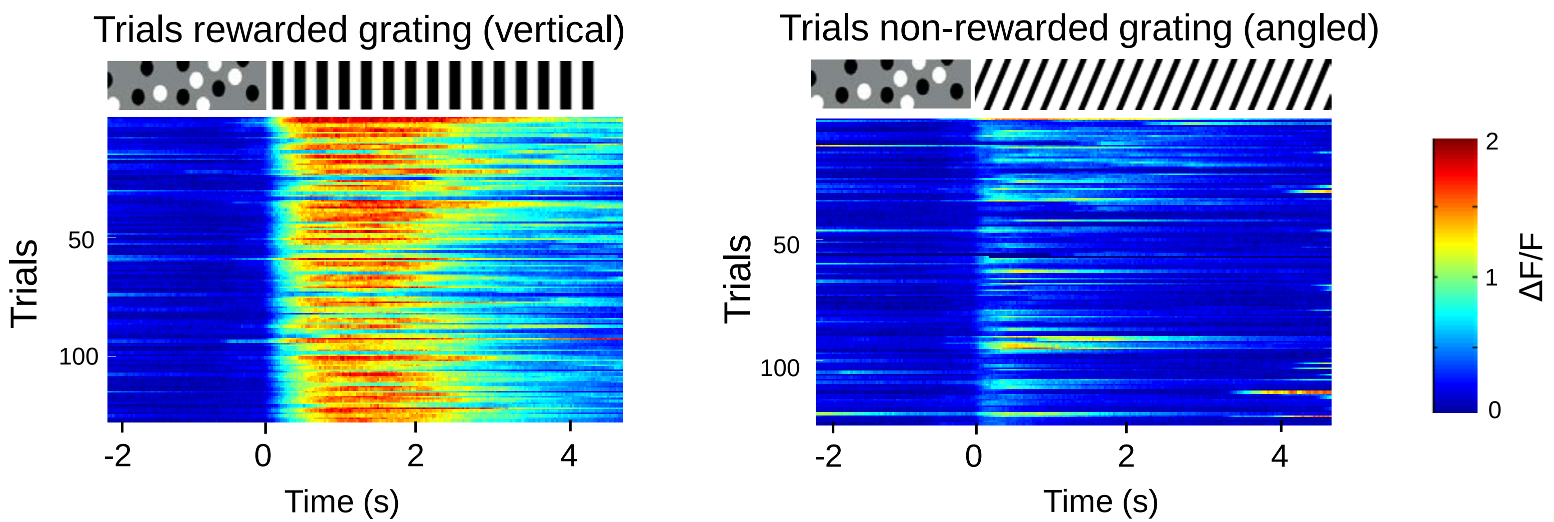


Eye position

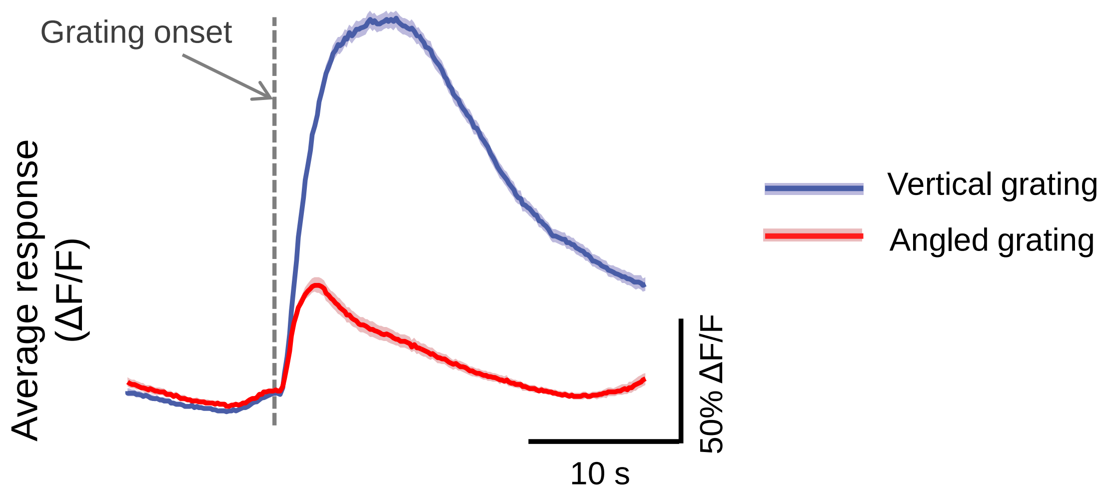
Speed 2.5x

Neuronal responses to task-relevant stimuli

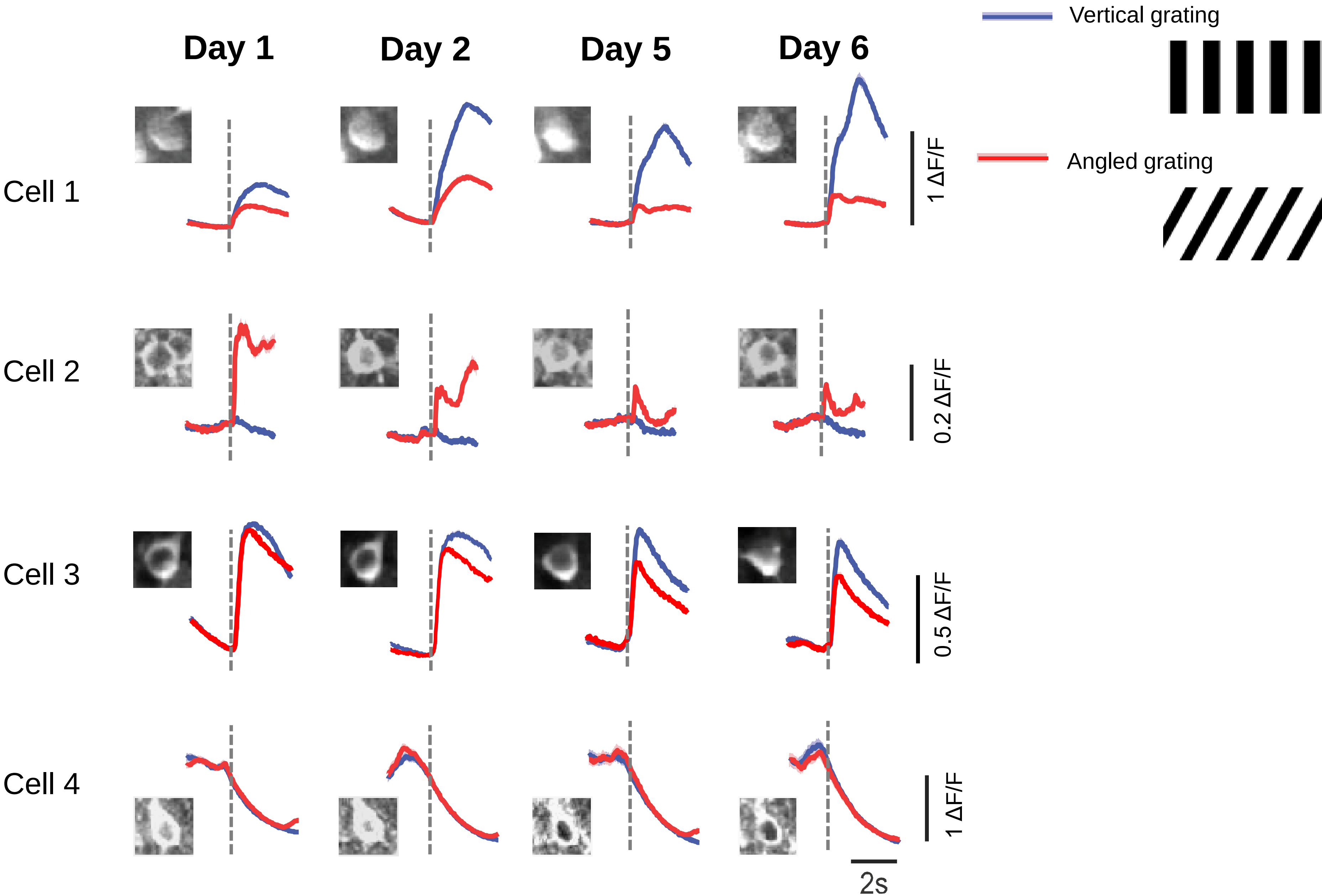
Example cell response to grating corridors:



Average response

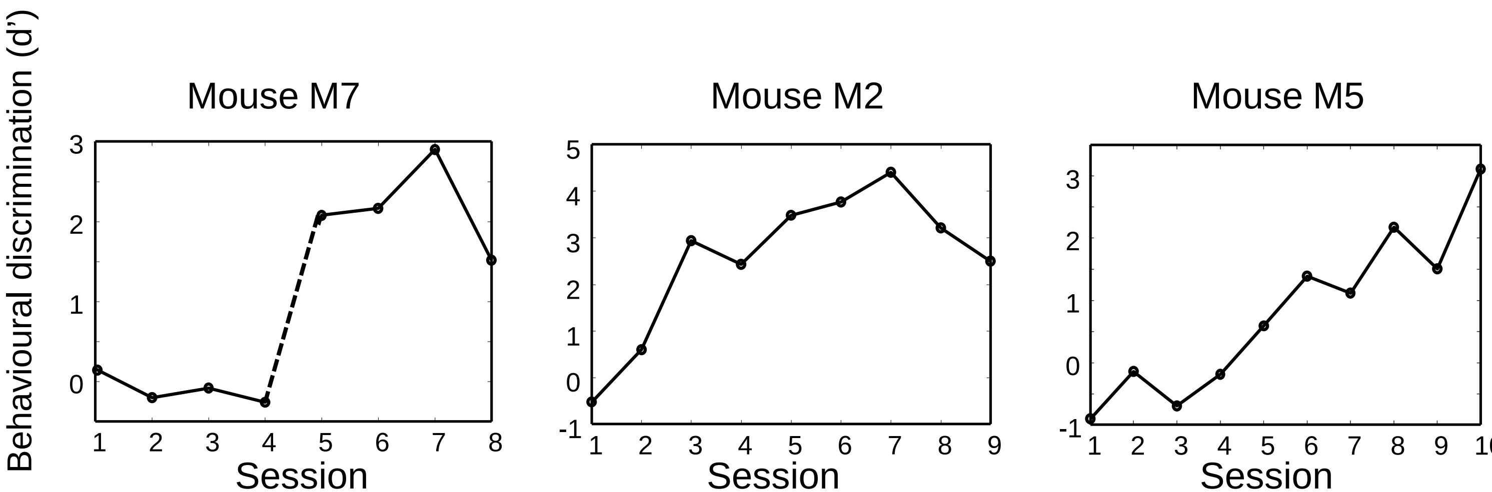


Neuronal responses to task-relevant stimuli

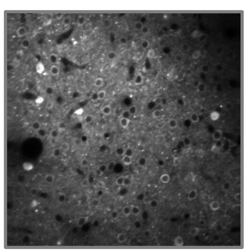


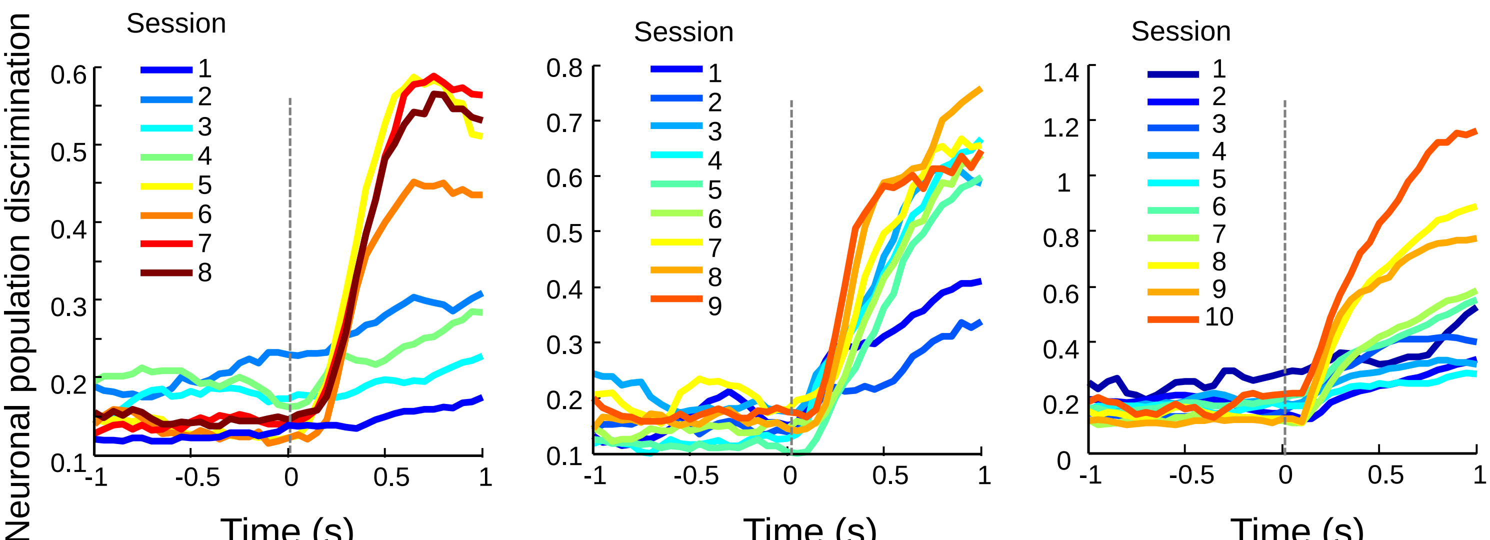
Relationship between behavioural and neuronal performance

Behavioural performance



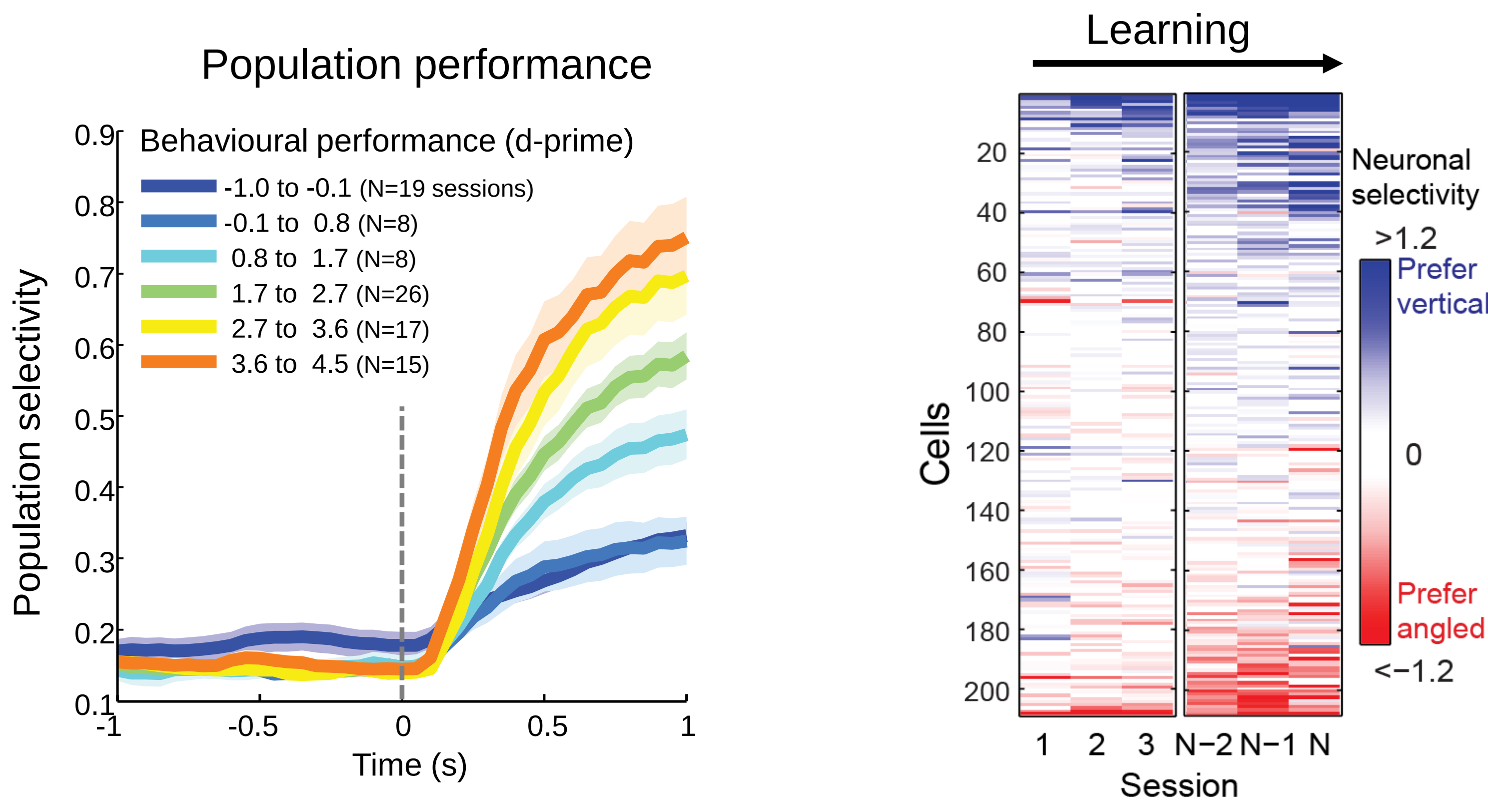
Neuronal population performance





Poort, Khan et al., Neuron 2015

Neuronal changes with learning

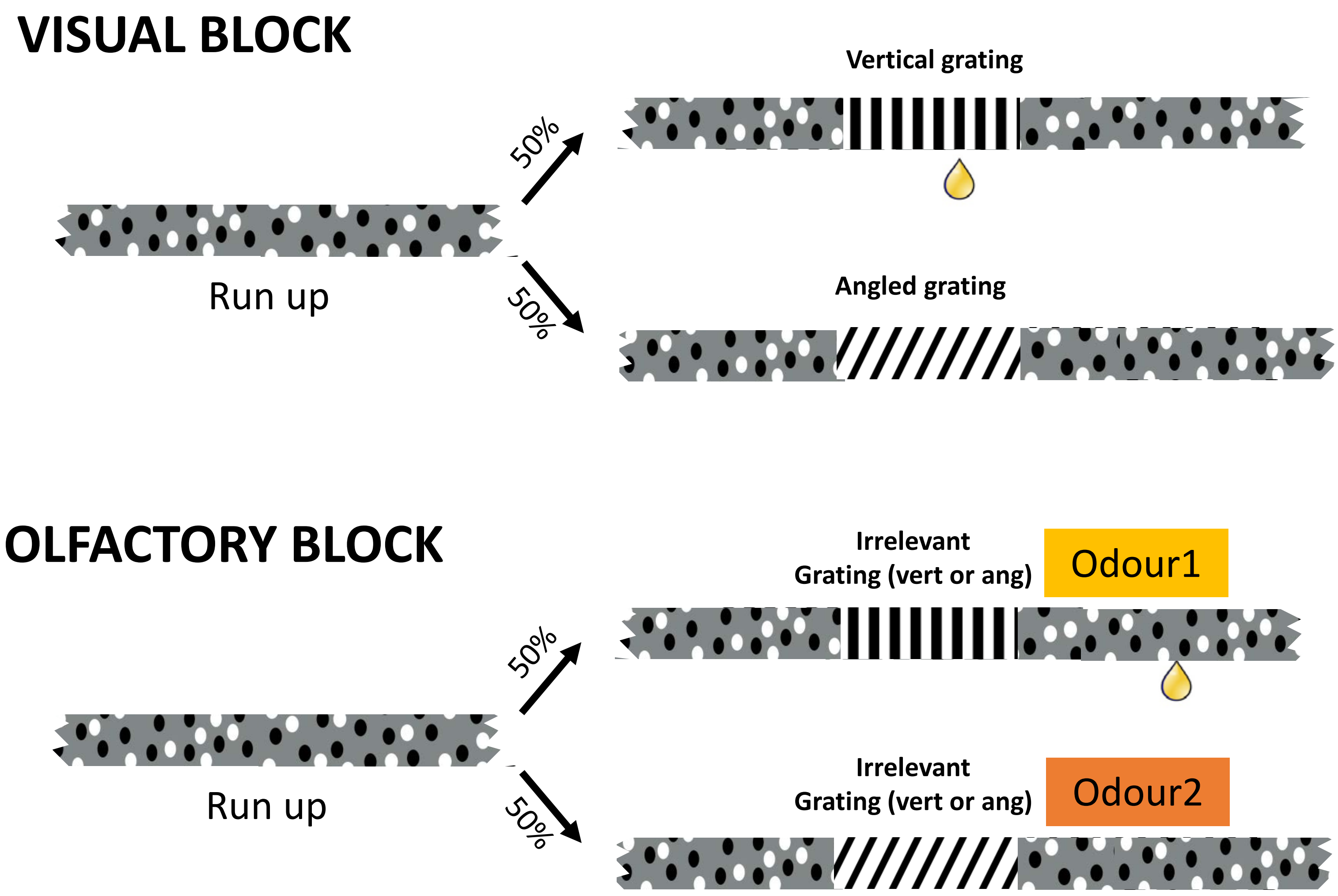


→ **The visual cortex gets better at distinguishing the two task-relevant stimuli, tightly correlated with behavioural performance**

Learning may increase the salience of task-relevant visual information to better inform behavioural decisions

Poort, Khan et al., Neuron 2015

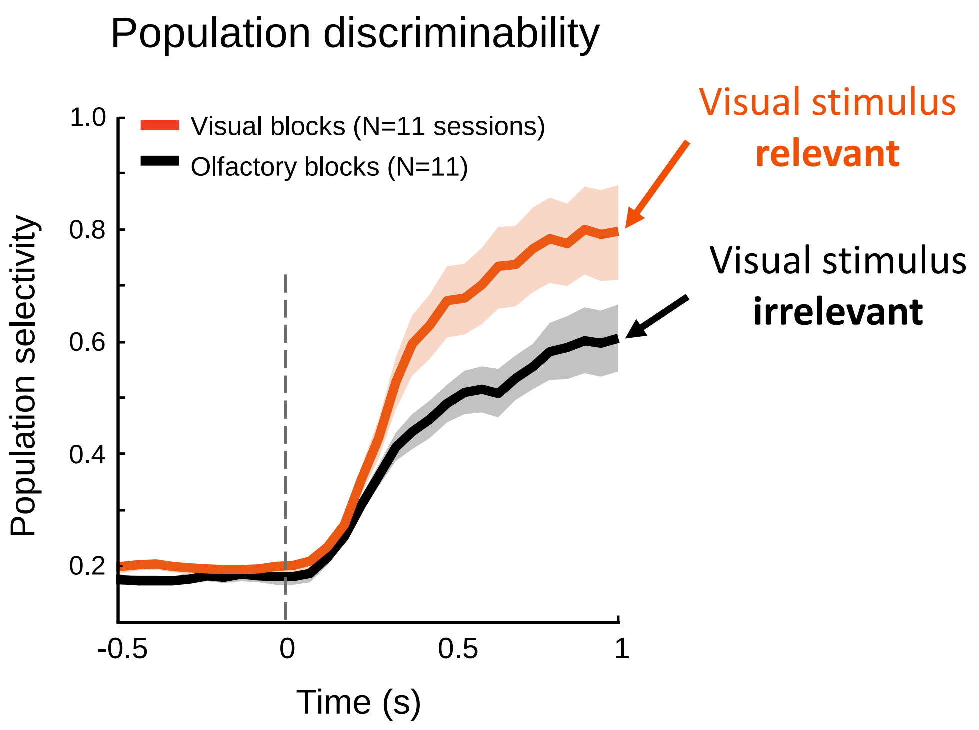
Switching between visual and olfactory discrimination task



Trained mouse switching between visual and olfactory task

Switching between visual and olfactory discrimination task

Mice switch between a visual and an olfactory task
(the same visual stimuli are shown but ignored)

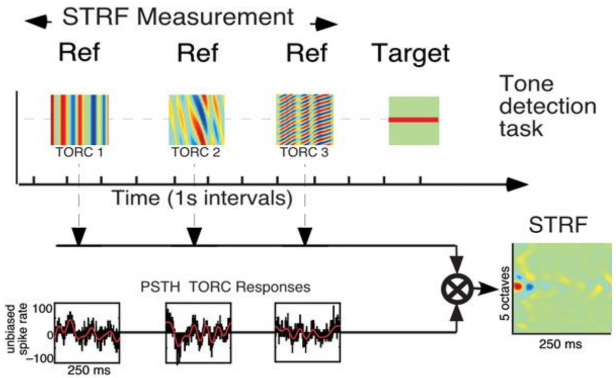


→ **Neurons in V1 are more selective when visual stimuli are relevant**

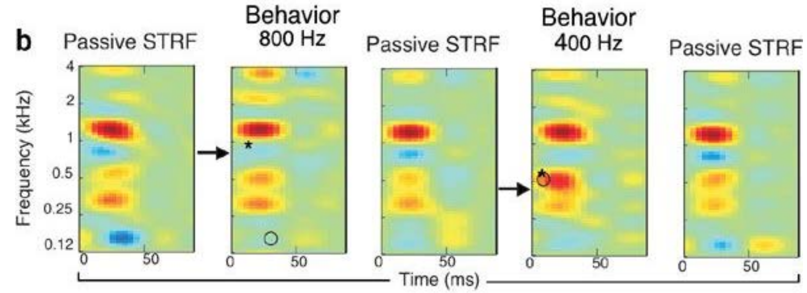
Poort, Khan et al., Neuron 2015

Modulation of sensory responses by task demands

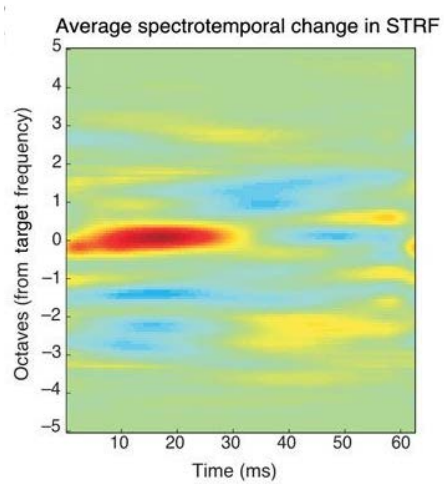
Task-dependent changes in auditory cortex receptive fields



STRF: spectrotemporal response field



Average change in response field passive listening vs during task

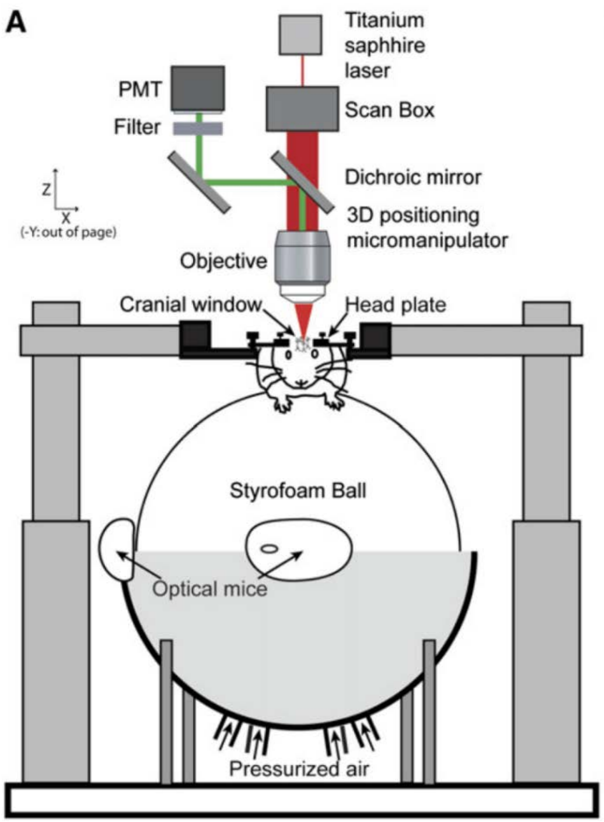


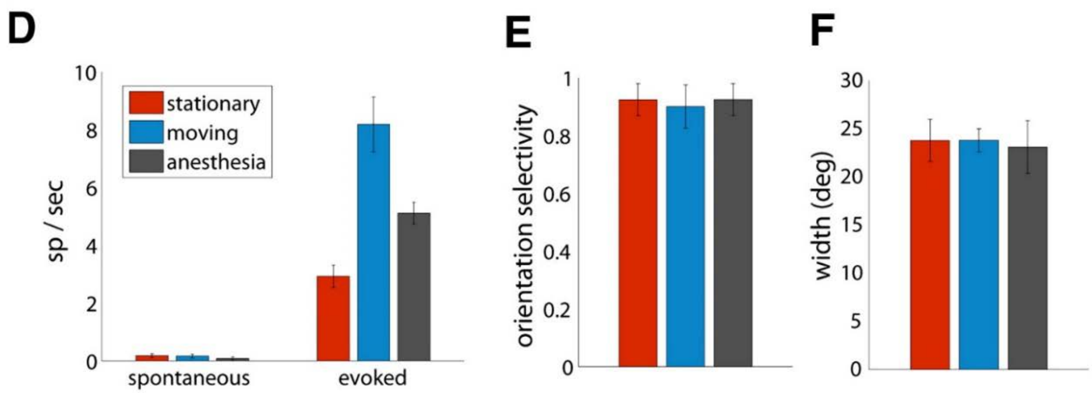
Sensory response properties are not fixed but reflect behavioural demands!

Fritz et al, 2003

Motor signals in sensory areas

Electrophysiological recordings in primary visual cortex in head-fixed, running mice



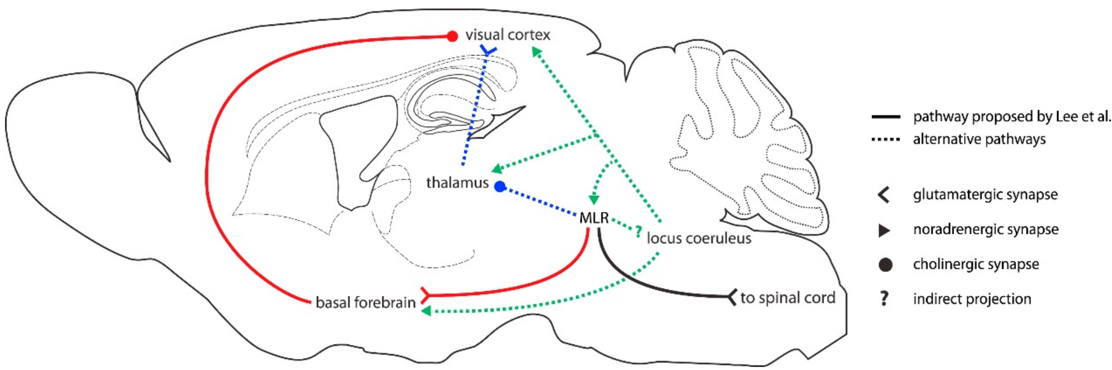


Visual responses in V1 are increased during locomotion

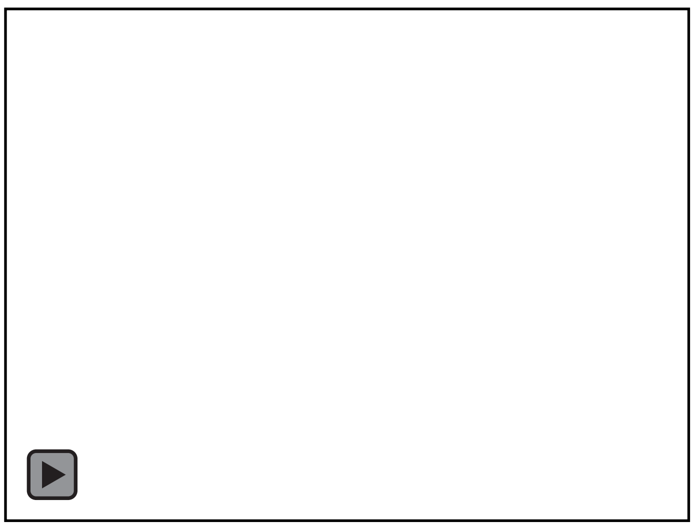
Niell & Styker, 2010

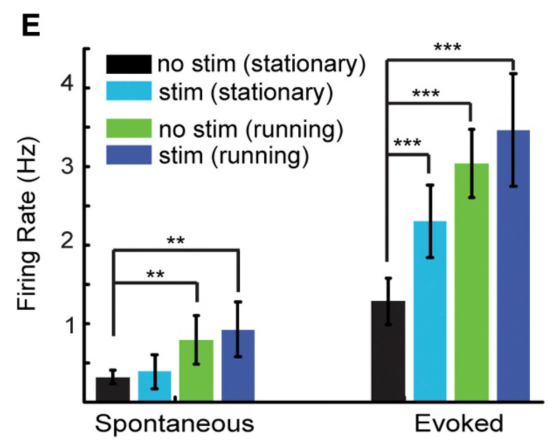
Motor signals in sensory areas

Circuit-mechanisms of locomotion-related signals in visual cortex?



MLR: mesencephalic locomotor region

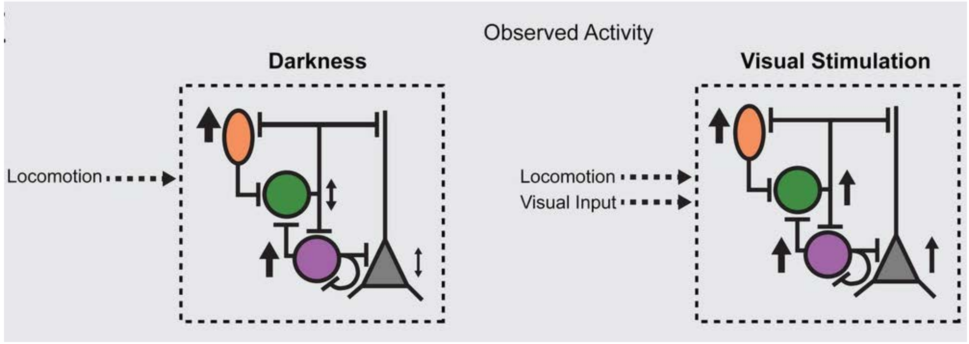




Lee at al., 2014

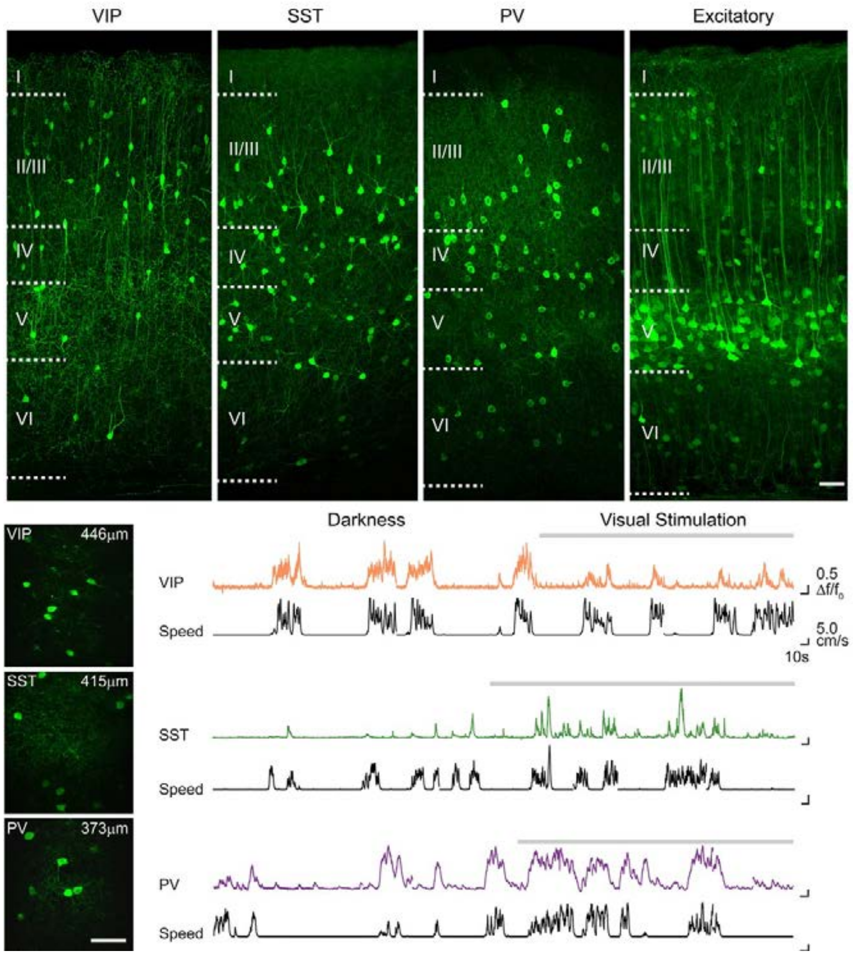
Motor signals in sensory areas

Circuit-mechanisms of locomotion-related signals in visual cortex?



Complex networks!! -> Modelling

Del Molino at al., 2017

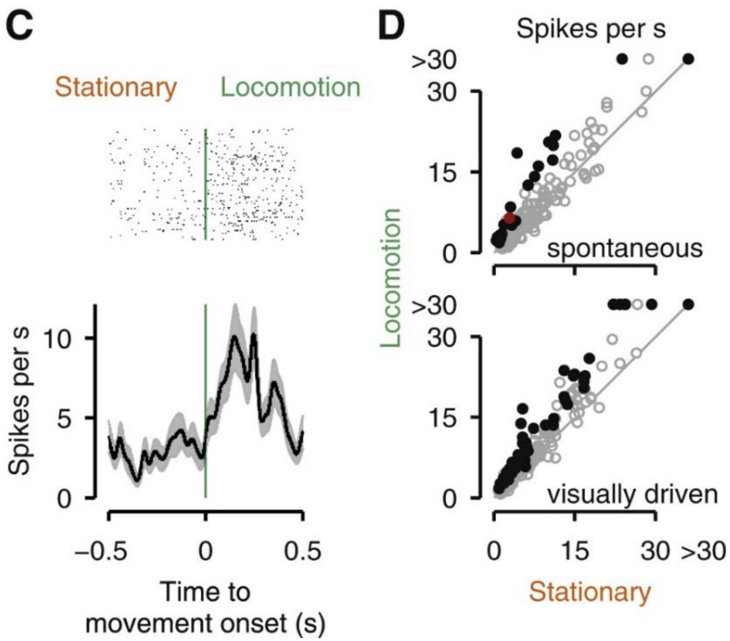


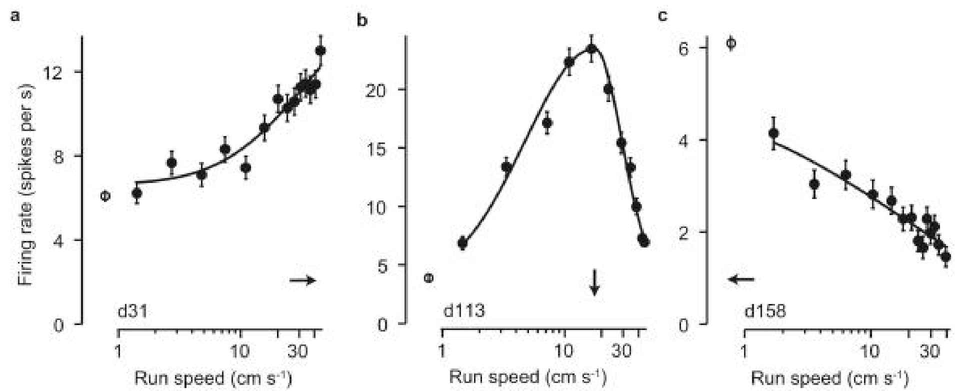
Fu at al., 2014
Pakan at al., 2016

Motor signals in sensory areas

Just gain control? No!

Activity in visual cortex excitatory cells:
modulated in the dark and carry detailed running speed information



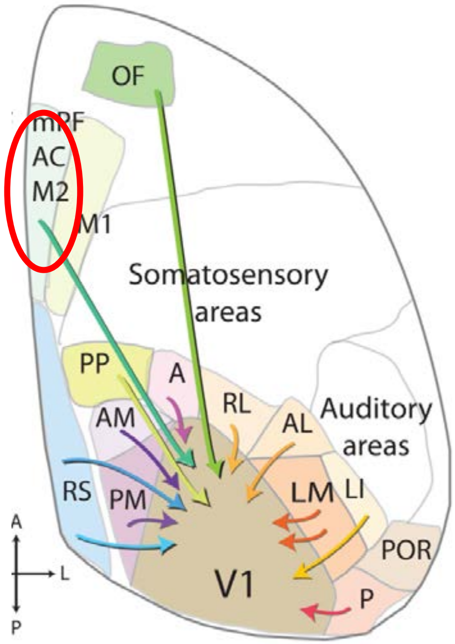


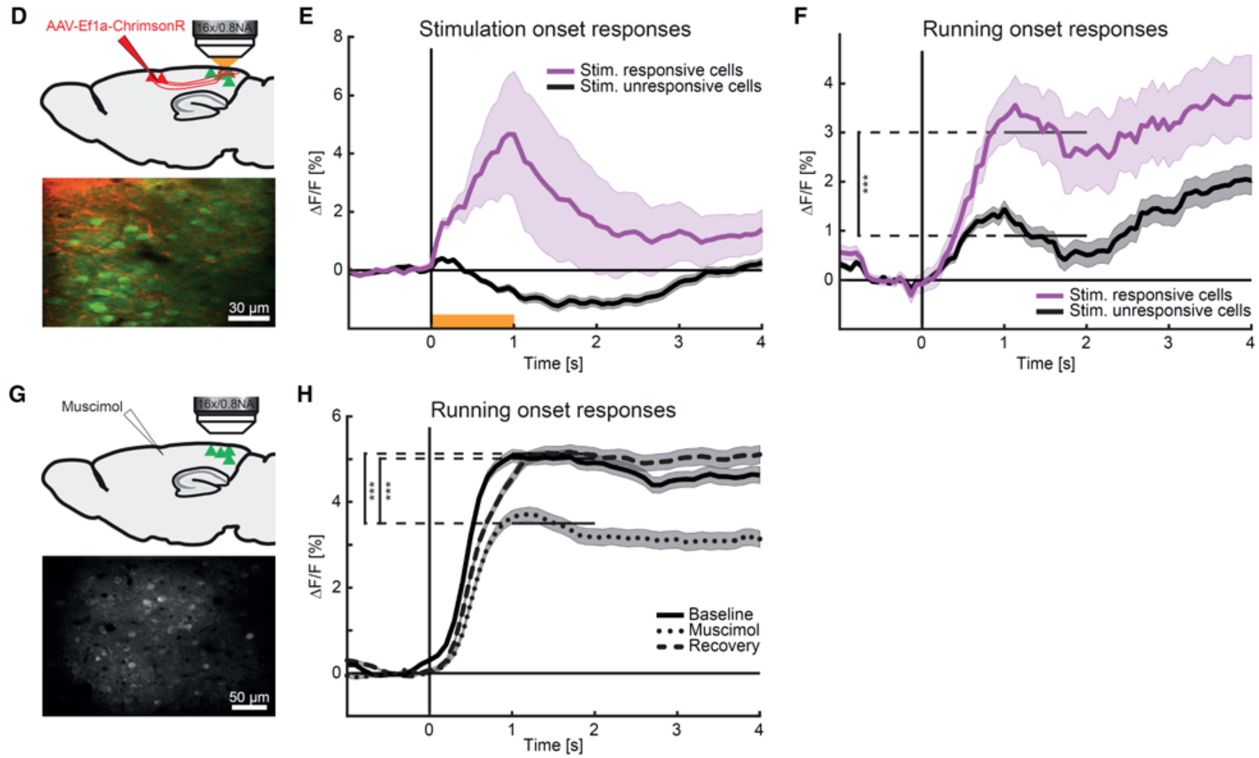
Erisken at al., 2014
Saleem at al., 2013

Motor signals in sensory areas

Origin of motor signals?

Anterior cingulate cortex (+ secondary motor cortex)?



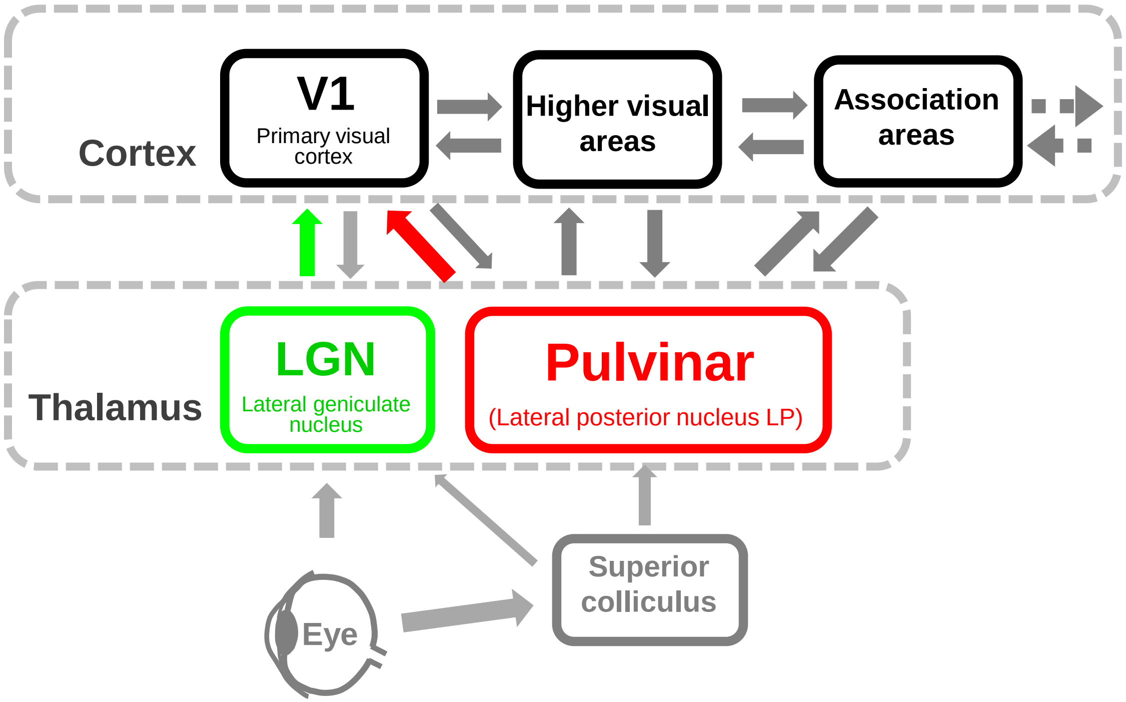


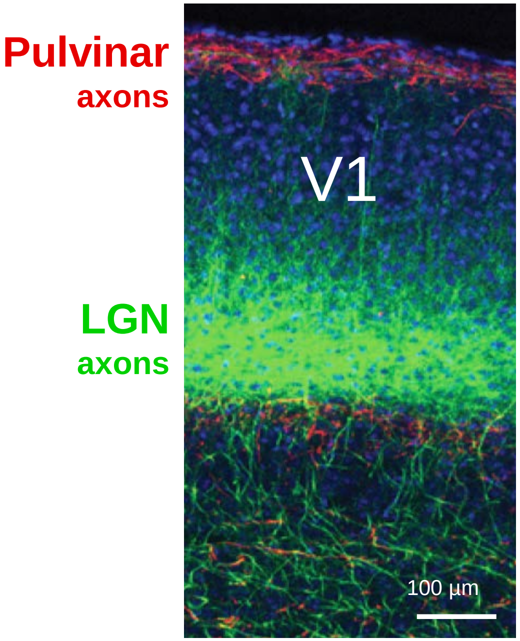
Leinweber at al., 2017

Motor signals in sensory areas

Origin of motor signals?

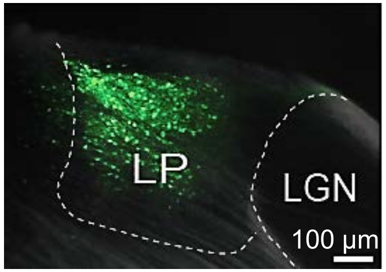
Thalamus?

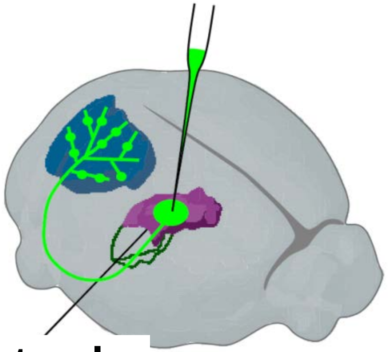




Imaging activity of thalamic projections in V1

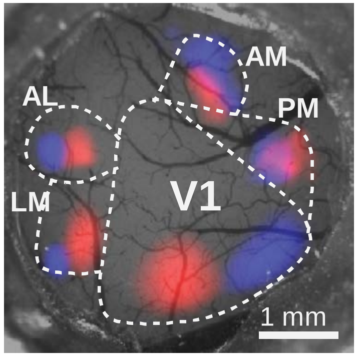
Expression of calcium indicator in pulvinar or LGN





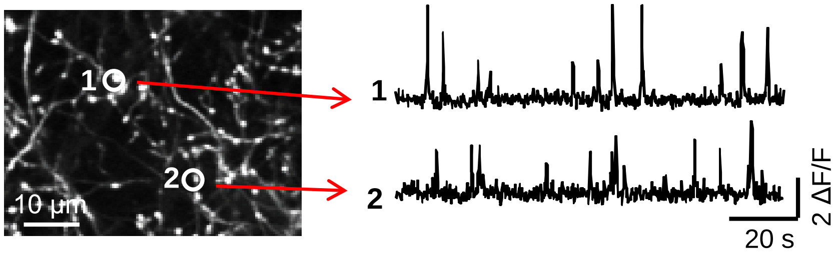
Lateral posterior nucleus LP

Intrinsic signal imaging to determine position of visual areas

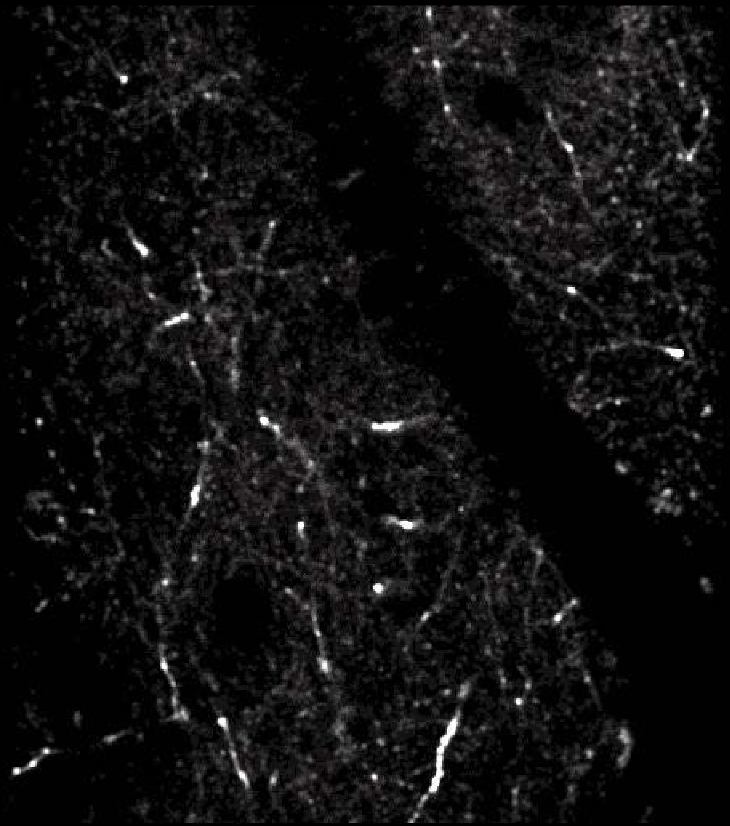


Two-photon imaging of thalamic projections in V1

LP axons in V1



In vivo two-photon calcium imaging of thalamic axons and boutons in layer 1 of V1

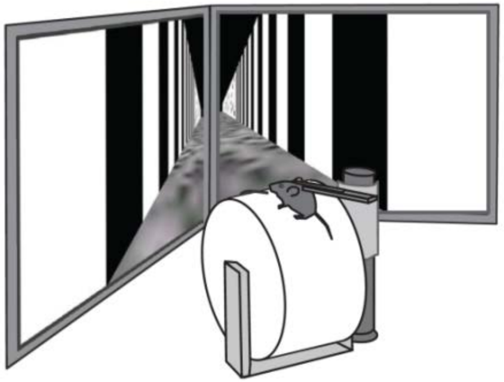


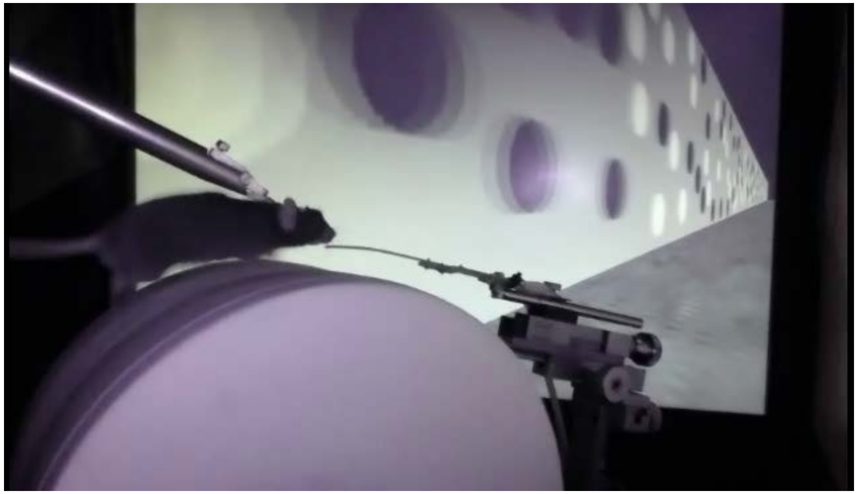
Speed 5x

15 µm

Imaging activity of thalamic projections in V1

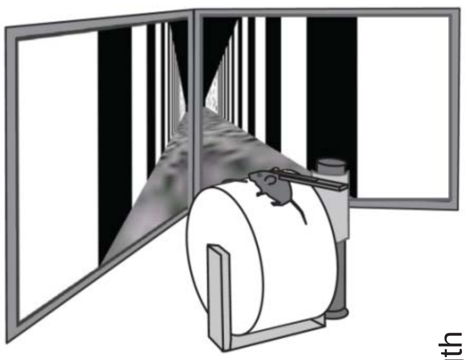
Visuo-motor ‘task’

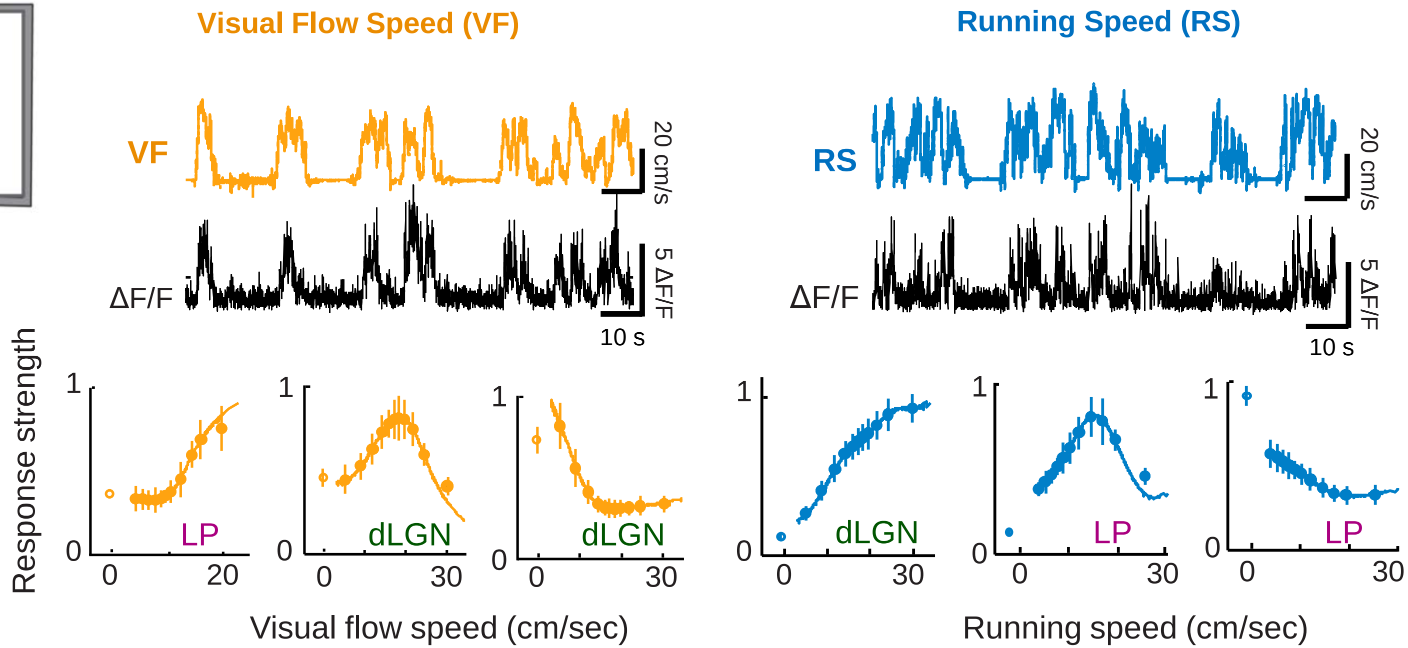


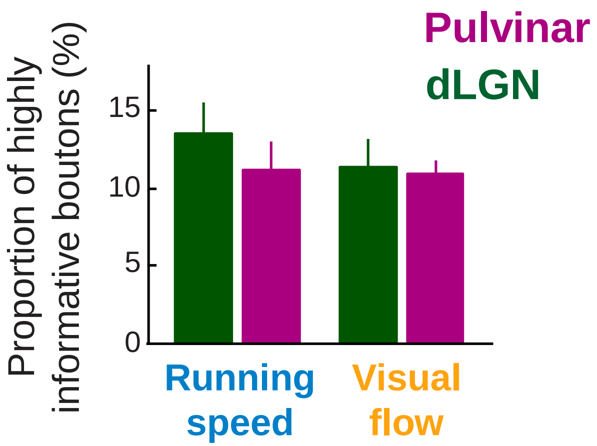


- Trained to run through virtual corridor
- Running uncoupled from visual flow

Visuo-motor signals in thalamic boutons in V1





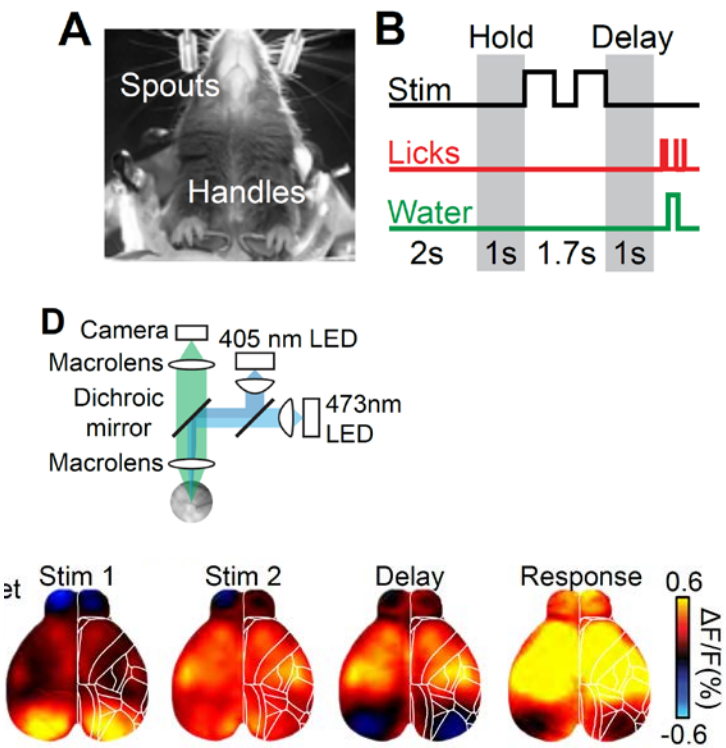


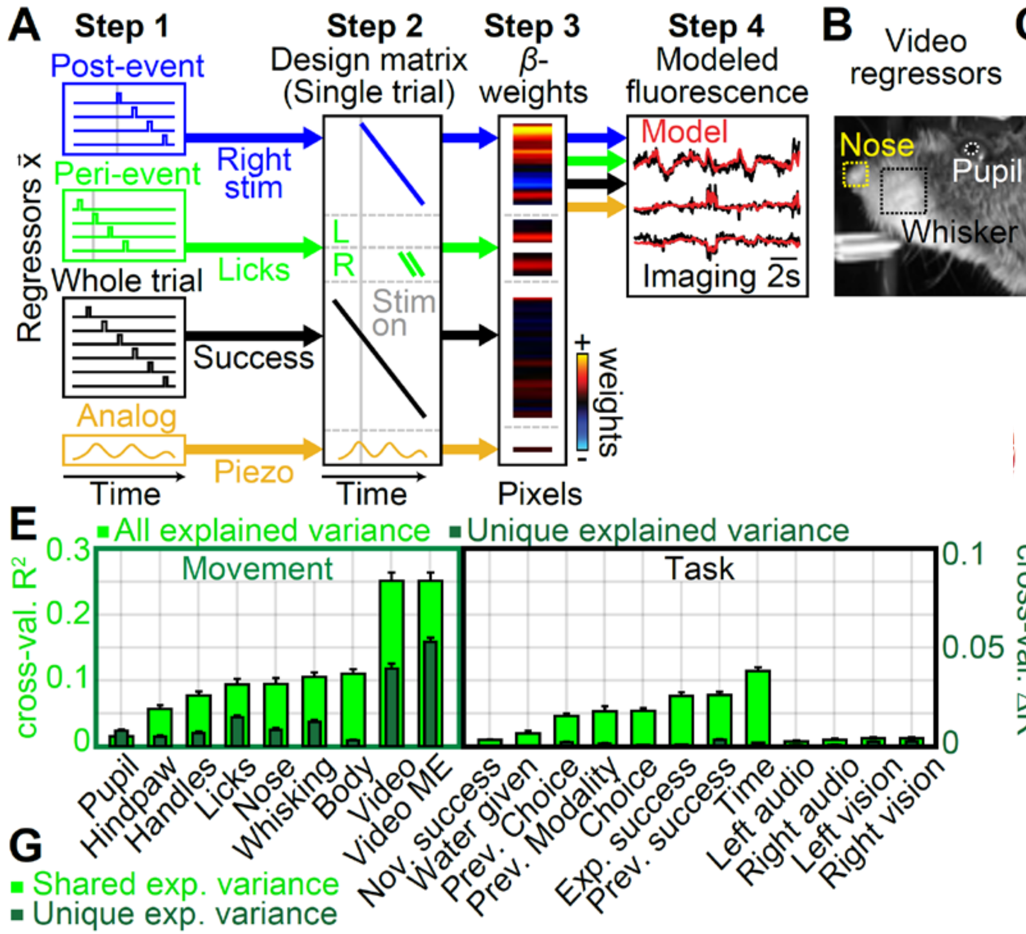
Roth, Dahmen, Muir et al.,
Nature Neurosciene 2016

Motor signals in sensory areas

Motor signals seem to dominate neuronal activity across the cortical surface

Widefield calcium imaging of cortical activity during a very simple spatial discrimination task



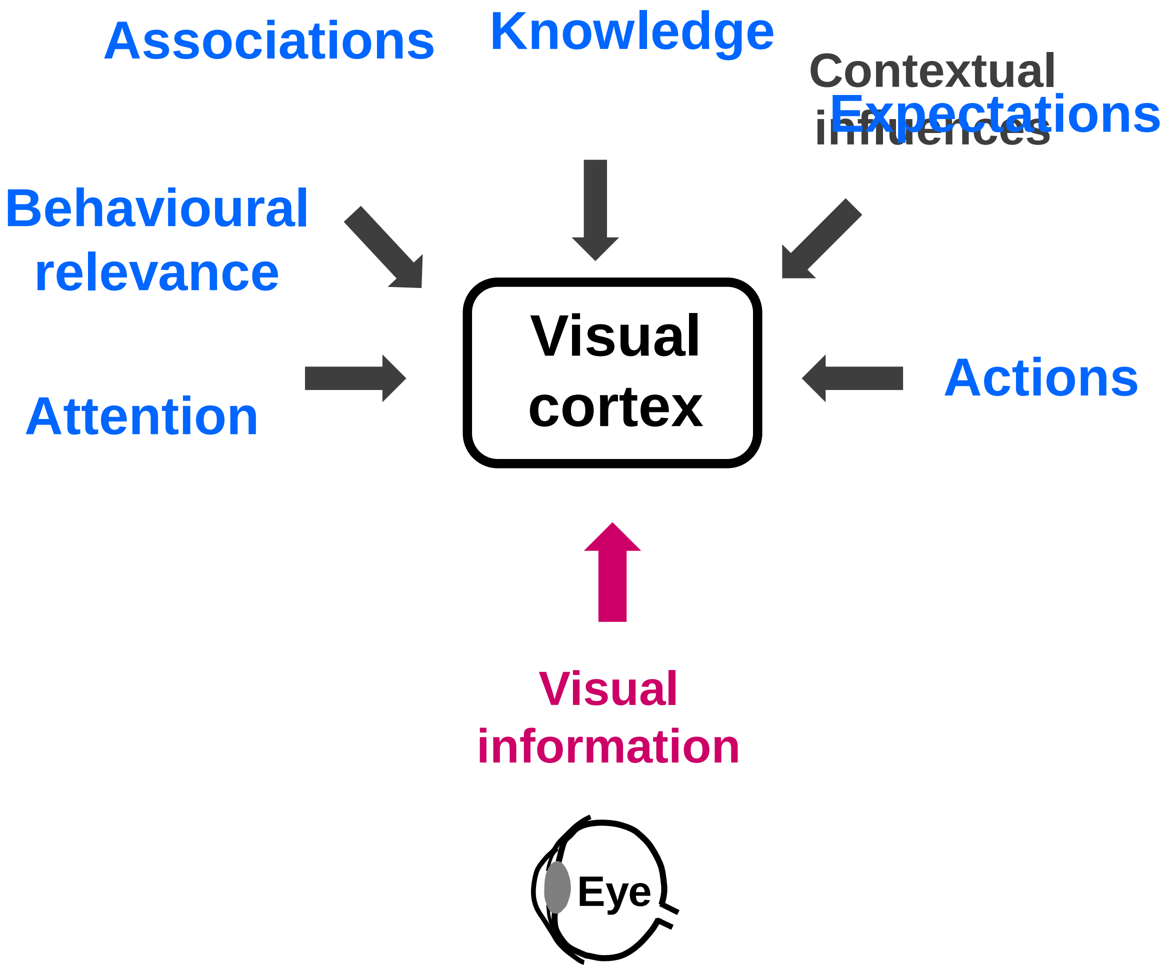


Musall at al., bioRxiv 2018

Motor signals in sensory areas

Motor signals as efference copy?

Integration of sensory and contextual 'top-down' signals



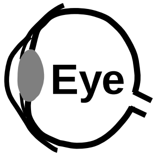
The importance of predictions for sensory perception

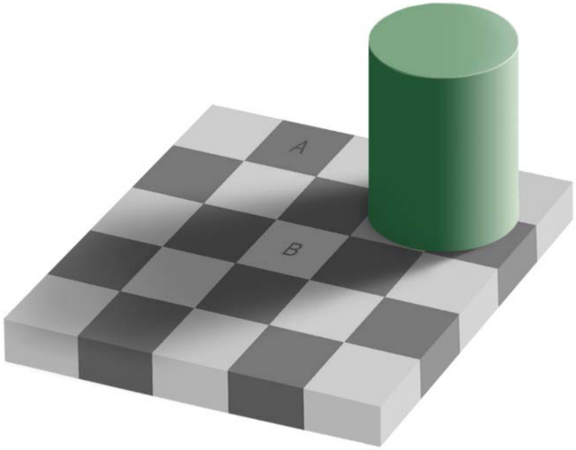
Predictions

Visual cortex

→ Comparison of <u>predicted</u> and <u>actual</u> input → Signal: **discrepancies**

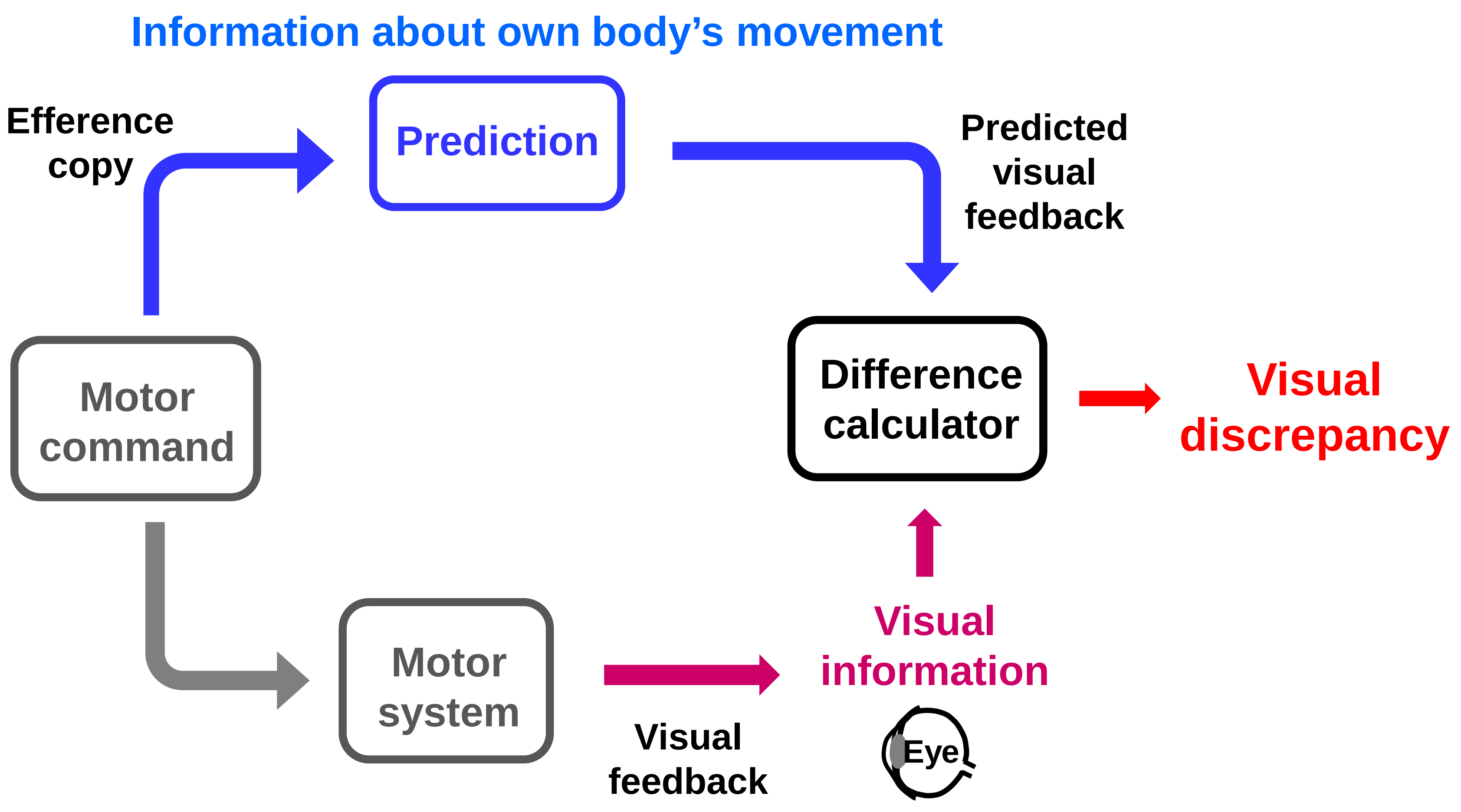
Visual information



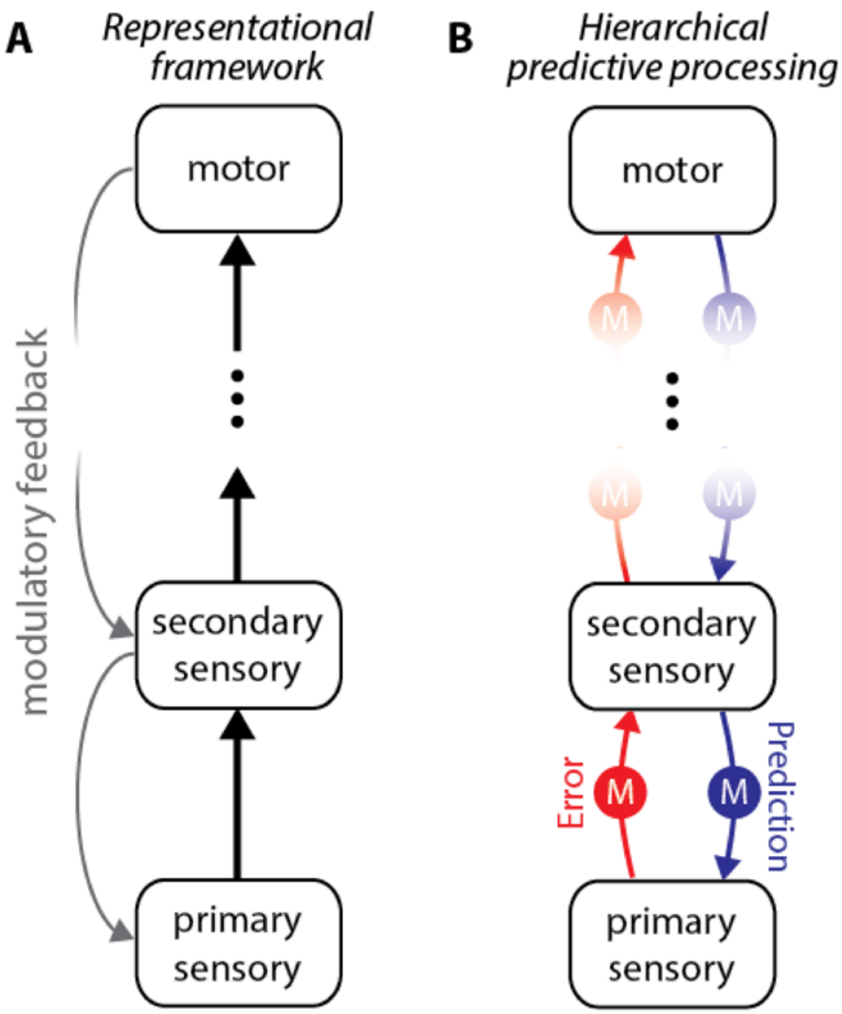


The importance of predictions for sensory perception

During eye or head movements:



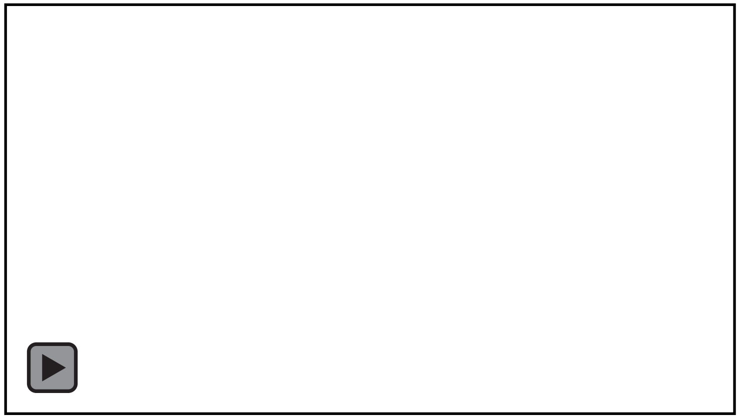
Predictive coding framework

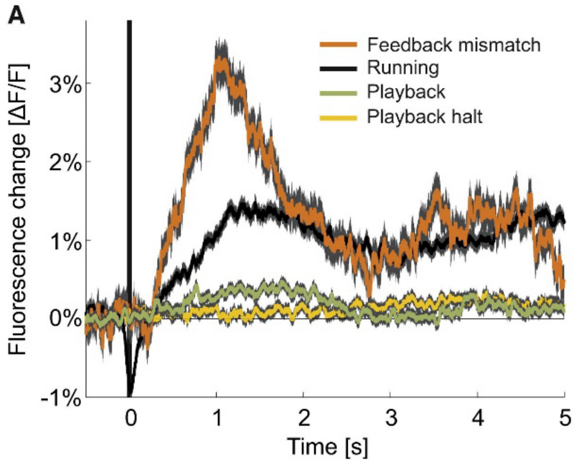


Kant, Helmholtz,…Friston, Clark, Mumford

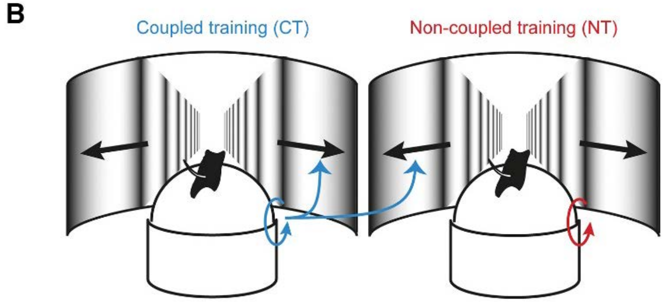
Predictive coding framework

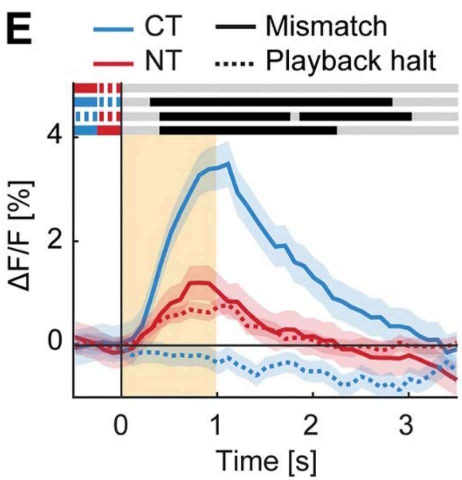
Experimental evidence for predictive coding in cortical circuits





A subset of neurons in V1 shows strong mismatch (prediction error) responses





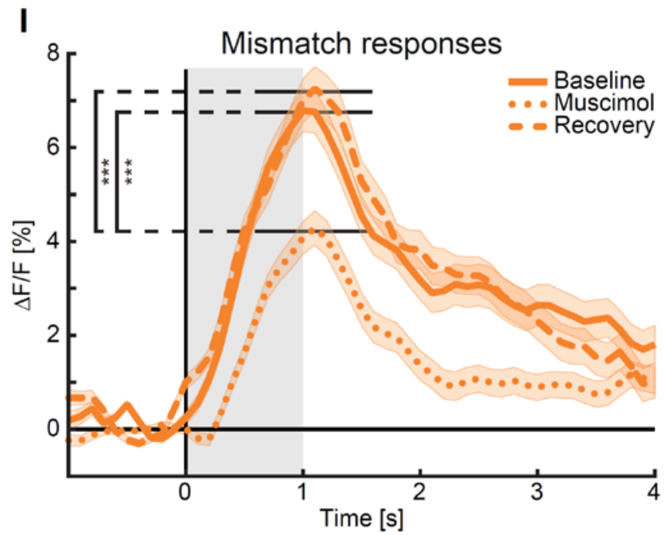
Mismatch responses are dependent on experience of visuo-motor coupling

Keller et al., 2012
Attinger et al., 2017

Potential circuit for mismatch computation in visual cortex

ACC

Muscimol in Anterior Cingulate Cortex (ACC)



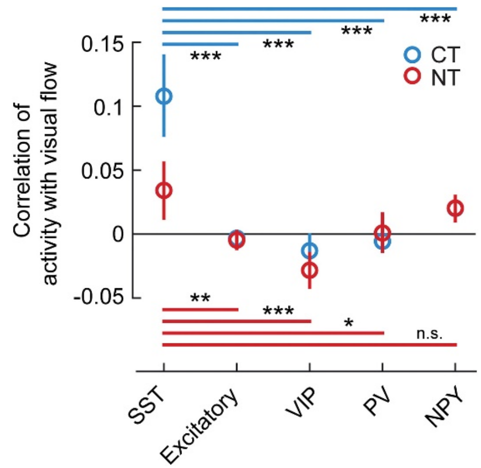
Mismatch response in V1 is weaker when ACC is silenced

Leinweber et al., 2017
Attinger et al., 2017

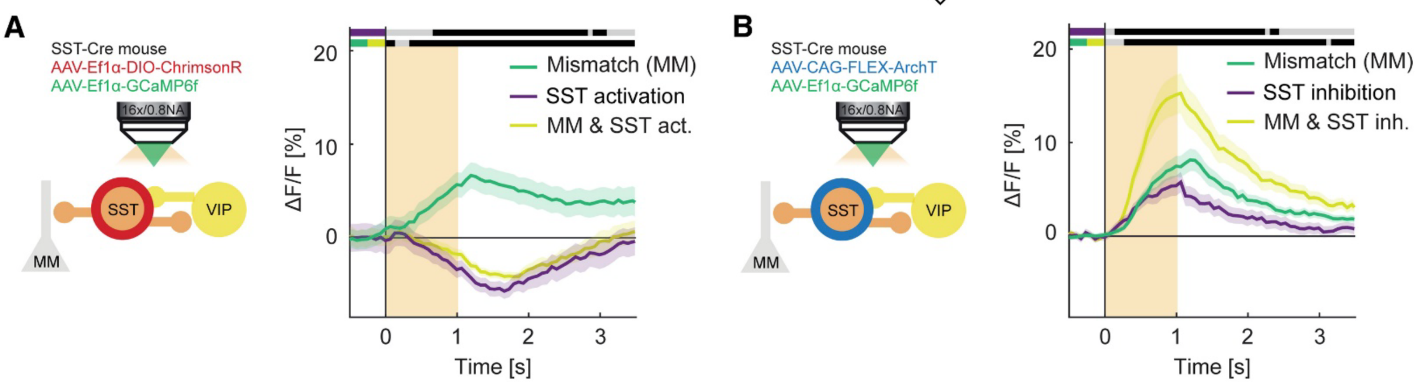
Potential circuit for mismatch computation in visual cortex

ACC

SOM



Somatostatin (SOM) neurons are most strongly driven by visual flow

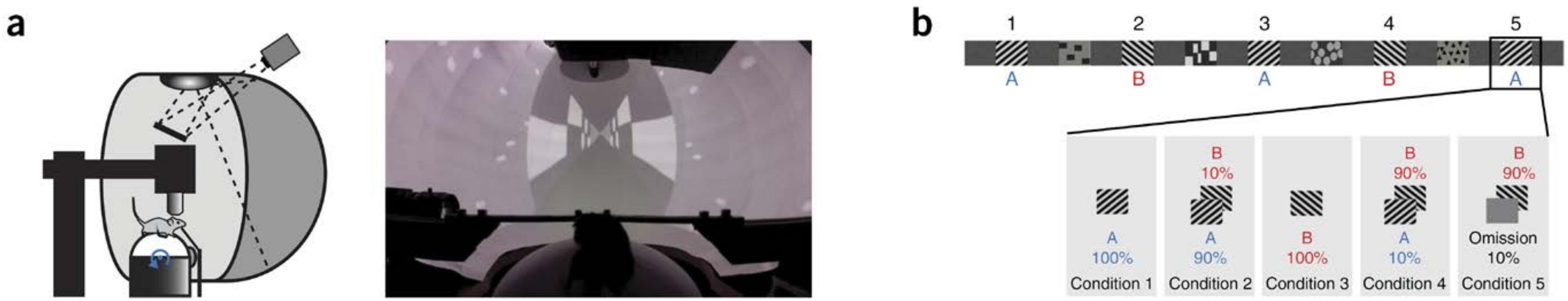


Optogenetic manipulation of SOM neurons alters mismatch response
(consistent with the model but no proof)

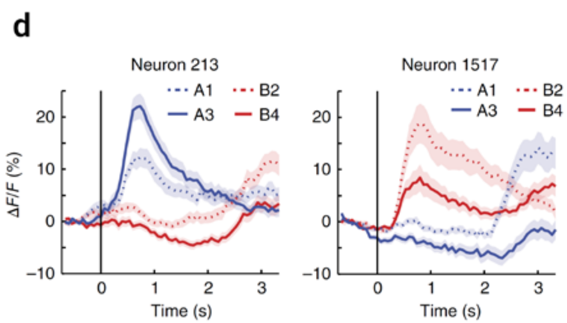
Attinger et al., 2017

Predictive coding framework

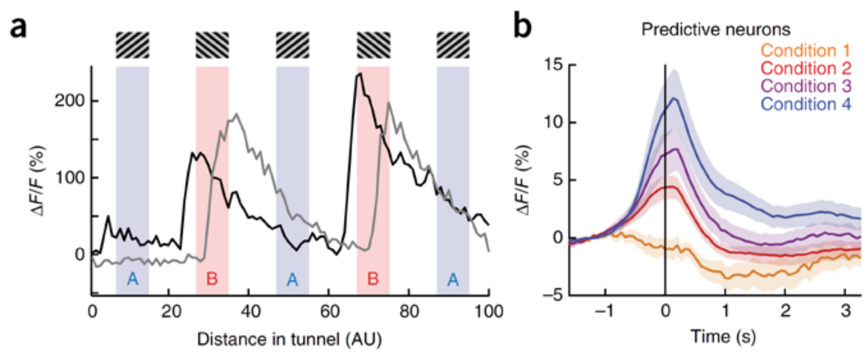
Spatial prediction and prediction error signals in visual cortex



Some V1 neurons become selective to spatial location



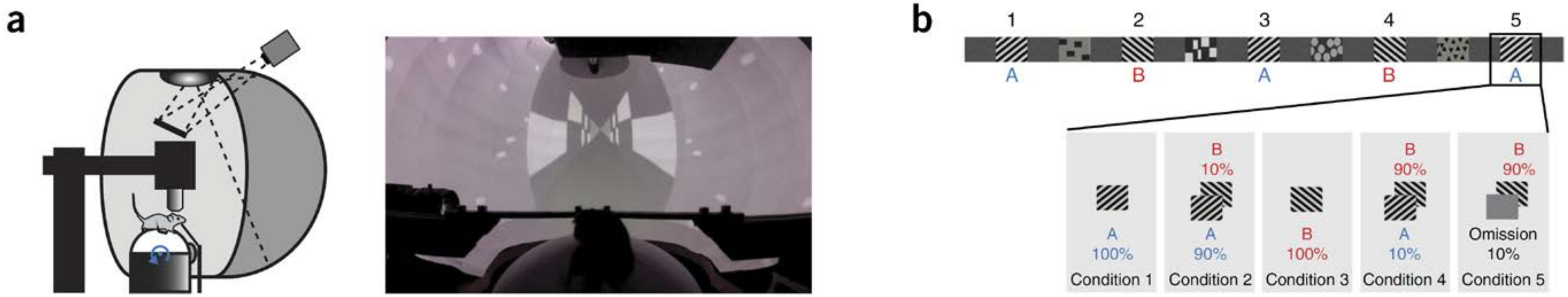
Some V1 start firing in expectation of visual stimuli



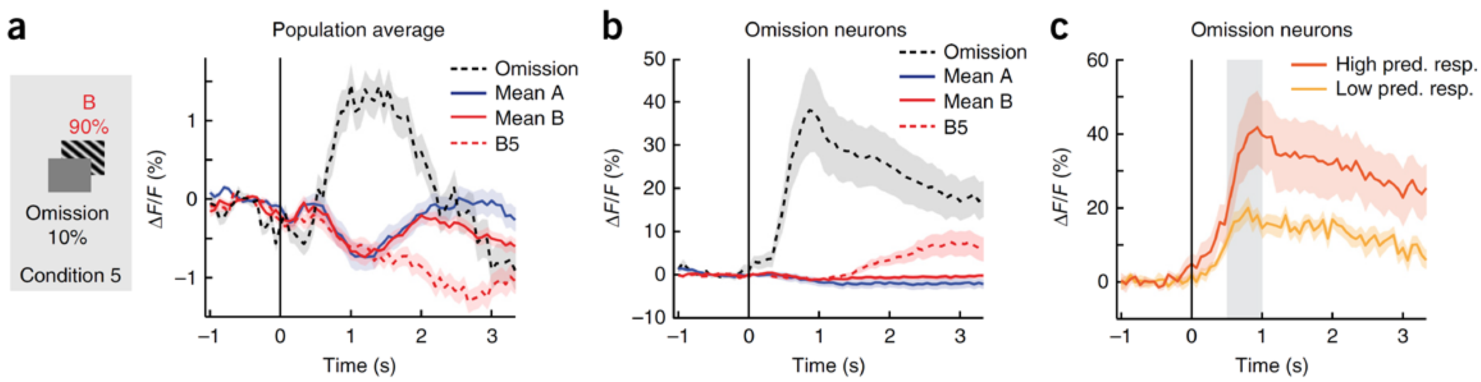
Fiser et al., 2016

Predictive coding framework

Spatial prediction and prediction error signals in visual cortex



Strong response in V1 when an expected visual stimulus is omitted



Fiser et al., 2016

Summary

- “Sensory” cortical areas are strongly influenced by context and behaviour
- Sensory processing is highly dynamic, allowing animals to flexibly access and process sensory information according to their current perceptual and behavioural demands.
- Still unclear to what degree top-down predictions influence or dominate sensory representations
- The sources of different contextual signals are mostly still unknown and we are only starting to determine the circuit mechanisms of how some of these signals are integrated with sensory information
- Recently, the focus has shifted away from the neocortex towards subcortical structures such as the superior colliculus, thalamus, cerebellum and the basal ganglia as sources for contextual modulation.

Further reading

Kahn A, Hofer SB. Contextual signals in visual cortex, Current Opinion in Neurobiology, 2018, 52: 131

Gilbert CD, Li W. Top down influences on visual processing, Nature Reviews Neuroscience, 2013

Maunsell JHR. Neuronal Mechanisms of Visual Attention, Annu. Rev. Vis. Sci, 2015

Keller GB, Mrsic-Flogel TD. Predictive Processing: A Canonical Cortical Computation, Neuron, 2018