



Group Show

Guest curated by Kelani Nichole of **TRANSFER**

18 January - 16 March 2019

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RE-FIGURE-GROUND

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Alan Warburton

Amina Ross

Carla Gannis

Claudia Hart

Eva Papamargariti

LaTurbo Avedon

Lorna Mills

Morehshin Allahyari

Pussykrew

Sabrina Ratté

Snow Yunxue Fu





RE-FIGURE-GROUND

We can no longer decipher what is real or fake. Simulation has been a topic of concerned conversation for decades, and in recent years, the contours of a new contemporary art movement have begun to emerge.

The 'Simulism' movement has developed in resistance to the ethos of Silicon Valley, the 'platforming' and globalisation of culture, and the widespread availability of technologies of power like artificial intelligence, photorealistic CGI, and virtual and augmented reality. 'Simulism' simultaneously embraces and subverts technology, interrogating the slippery world in which we live, and proposing humanist and non-binary futures.

In a 1977 lecture, Philip K. Dick spoke of counterfeit, deranged, private worlds where alternative experiences branch off and possible futures emerge, revealing the layers of simulation mediating contemporary culture. *Simulacra and Simulation*, a Jean Baudrillard treatise from the early 1980s, explored how signs, symbols, realities, and societies entwine into shared experiences—and how the saturation of such simulacra was beginning to render all meaning meaningless, long before we immersed ourselves in the overwhelming onslaught of digital stimulation we take for granted today. In her *Cyborg Manifesto* (1984) Donna Haraway explains the virtual camera emulates rules of the real world, but in a symbolic manner. The virtual camera symbolically embodies a liminal space, an interface that enhances our physical bodies with a prosthetic extension.

Curated by Kelani Nichole of TRANSFER and featuring works by Morehshin Allahyari, LaTurbo Avedon, Snow Yunxue Fu, Carla Gannis, Claudia Hart, Lorna Mills, Eva Papamargariti, Pussykrew, Sabrina Ratté, Amina Ross, and Alan Warburton. *RE-FIGURE-GROUND* explores myth, identity, and the body. It proposes a softening – opening up an alternative view to the ideologies of Silicon Valley. Virtual space is inhabited with queer bodies; the boundaries of technology and the body are blurred, as are the lines between author, image, and algorithm. The artists unapologetically disrupt normative cultural production, demonstrating what it means to inhabit this infinitely malleable world.

RE-FIGURE-GROUND is the first exhibition of arebyte Gallery's 2019 programme titled *Home* and has been made with support from Arts Council England.

Alan Warburton is a British artist who explores how software, particularly CGI, shapes certain outputs and aesthetics in contemporary culture. His work has appeared at Ars Electronica, National Gallery of Victoria, Carnegie Museum of Art, Austrian Film Museum, Laboral, HeK Basel, Photographers Gallery, London Underground, Southbank Centre, Channel 4, Cornerhouse Manchester, Mark Moore L.A., Denver Digerati, and Adult Swim.

His video essays like *Goodbye Uncanny Valley* and *Spectacle, Speculation, and Spam* document how advances in visual technologies don't necessarily facilitate richer storytelling. They ask us to consider the interrelation of power, technology, and images in the 21st century as they survey how both commercial studios and independent creators are pushing the boundaries of what's possible in digital representation.

"Like magic, crime, or power, CGI works best when undetected," he posits in *Goodbye Uncanny Valley*. Accordingly, he celebrates "the wilderness" beyond the uncanny valley, where creators experiment with grotesque of finishes, effects, surfaces, and algorithms to reveal some of the work that goes into motion graphics. "Seductive digital surfaces speak more about this age of technology when they fall apart, revealing their construction at the hands of imperfect people and imperfect machines."

In *Homo Economicus*, Warburton brings this line of thought to a more sociological plane. He interviewed British financiers, exploring how their corporate jobs demand corporeal discipline and competitive attitudes, then represented them as CGI characters at desks, inflating and deflating like balloons. "If you're making money, a trader somewhere else is losing money," one says bitterly. Another avatar smiles and goes totally limp as he describes his stout, muscular legs—he wishes they were just a bit longer. The results put the aesthetics of male success through a lens that makes them sound ridiculous: achievements are hot air, corporate power is deflated.

Homo Economicus: Golem is a follow-up piece that gathers additional data and focuses more squarely on how men view their bodies. In interviews with 50 men, Warburton asked which body parts they would change and added their responses to a single stock 3D model. "So if 30 guys wanted bigger biceps, the biceps got 30 times larger. It's a logic of accumulation, which relates to the financial ideas I'm interested in and to me reflects some of the most basic male impulses towards power."



Amina Ross, an “undisciplined artist” and community organizer, creates boundary-crossing works that explore identity, intimacy, and community in physical and digital spaces. Besides creating video and installation art that has been shown at Chicago Artists Coalition, Hyde Park Art Center, Links Hall, and several other Chicago art spaces, Ross founded and curates Beauty Breaks, an experimental workshop series about wellness, and Eclipsing, a multi-media arts festival that celebrates how “dark and night spaces provide a place to challenge dominant and oppressive systems, structures, and ways of seeing.”

Ross’s DIY organizing and creative perspective inform one another. “My attic is just an attic, unless there’s a group of people who believe otherwise,” Ross says. “I’m used to working in spaces that are not demarcated, that are not quite venues but more so like weird corners. There’s something magical about being able to name and mark something.”

Ross’s art takes accordingly long and poetic titles; and the works’ unexpected collisions make poignant commentary about the digital and physical places where we embody our identities. The piece *by your hands i open/ spill out./ i’m the inside of an egg/ i pour/ we bloom/ magma rushing from a jagged crown of earth/ molten and dangerous and alive/ can’t you feel?* is a 3D animation displayed on a screen that’s propped on a homey comforter. Embroidery floss wraps around an extension cord, as if it were a braid of hair. It’s part of Ross’s *Daisy Chain* solo show, which Kemi Alabi writes is “claiming love as recovered ancestral practice and future technology. Intimacy as life hack.”

Throughout that installation, Ross collaged tropes of technology, black femininity, and domesticity: fake window sills frame digital screens; hoop earrings carry the weight of curtain tapestries; a large chain is made of both open and closed links. It explores the daisy chain as “a flower garland, a wiring sequence, a sex configuration, a climbing failsafe, a synthesizer series, a web of lovers, the links between us, visible and celebrated, hidden and unknown, forgotten.” It looks at where feminine, non-binary, and minority voices can be both represented and overlooked, both seen and taken for granted. It embraces their familiar languages but also, by putting them in new places, imagines alternative narratives.



Carla Gannis's practice, which spans GIFs, digital paintings, videos, AR, and sculpture, "examines the narrativity of 21st-century representational technologies and questions the hybrid nature of identity, where virtual and physical embodiments of self diverge and intersect." Her work has been shown by the Whitney Museum of American Art, Bitforms Gallery, The Streaming Museum, DAM Gallery, NY Media Center, and Hudson River Museum.

"First and foremost, I am a storyteller, rooted in Southern Gothic and expanded into 'Internet Gothic,' where I have re-focused my narratives through 21st Century representational technologies," she writes . "With digital collage and remix I reveal the hybrid nature of identity, where virtual and physical embodiments of self diverge and intersect. I invite viewers to experience our inescapably mediated lives "through a digital looking glass" where reflections on power, sexuality, marginalization, and agency often emerge. I am fascinated by contemporary modes of digital communication, the power (and sometimes the perversity) of popular iconography, and the situation of identity in the blurring contexts of technological virtuality and biological reality. Humor and absurdity are important elements in building my nonlinear narratives, and layers upon layers of history are embedded in even my most future-focused works ."

Humor, absurdity, and rich references to art history are on full display in *A Subject Self-Defined*. The series takes its name from Joseph Kosuth's 1966 neon sculpture that spelled out "a subject self-defined," part of his body of work aiming to strip down the art object to bare ideas and information. Gannis does this for the selfie, exploring how the everyday art form addresses issues of branded identity, digital dematerialization, female representation, and online agency by producing dozens of selfie works across drawing, painting, animation, social media, and augmented reality that reference artists from Pieter Bruegel the Elder to Duchamp to Cindy Sherman.



Claudia Hart emerged as a voice in intermedia identity art in the 1990s and picked up virtual imaging, VR, and AR practices, as they emerged, to examine the body, perception, and nature in her decades of work. She's shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Upfor Gallery, Friedhofsmuseum, bitforms Gallery, the Lawrence Art Center, Art Center Nabi, Mana Contemporary, the New York Electronic Arts Festival, and Eyebeam, among others, and developed the first art school curriculum, at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, dedicated to teaching simulations technologies in a contemporary art world context.

Hart says, "My work adapts the forms and software normally used to create 3D shooter games. It transposes discussions about digital technology and a critique of the media through a feminist lens. In the context of ideas about a technology that has replaced nature by threatening to eclipse and permanently alter it, I argue that contemporary ideas about technology are not a rupture but a reflection of very conventional ways of thinking."

The Flower Matrix reinterprets the "labyrinth of the minotaur," a mythological maze from which there is no escape. It appropriates a computer model from the free online digital repository 3D Warehouse and covers it with emoji icons of power, money, addiction, and control, symbols of casino-capitalism.

She describes *The Flower Matrix* as "a liminal space, an imaginary Alice In Wonderland world of inversion where the rational order of reason and technology turns in on itself." Viewers can journey through the virtual, emoji-filled wonderland with the Oculus Rift or Vive, but Hart also brought the piece into the physical world by creating quilts, wallpaper, and hand-thrown ceramics that, when viewed through her custom AR app *The Looking Glass*, display digitally embedded flowers. Her multimedia craft objects use computer vision to "magically" reveal new information.





Eva Papamargariti is a Greek architect and artist who employs digital imagery as well as printed material and sculptural installations to explore simultaneity—the merging and dissolving of physical and virtual surroundings—and how fabricated synthetic images and physical devices define and fragment our identity and everyday experience. She's presented the results of these artistic inquiries at the New Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, Tate Britain, MoMA PS1, Transmediale Festival, and many other physical and digital exhibition spaces. She's also collaborated with brands like NIKE, Kenzo, and MTV.

Her work presents rendered 2D and 3D spaces and scenarios that blur the boundaries between the digital and physical by provoking new narrations of everyday activities that happen at the intersection of those “separate” ecosystems.

“It feels like we are observing this condition most of the time through a filtered double lense,” says Papamargariti “like there is always an in-between mechanical eye that hovers over our skins, our cities, and the environments we inhabit or don't inhabit right now, so I think this expansion or blurriness of the borders between real and unreal it will always somehow be present in my work.”

Take for example *Someday I will Buy an Ikea Chair with Bitcoins*. Footage of a digital household, furniture assembly, and catalogue-like product shots collide beneath the kind of language you might use to describe a piece of furniture you're getting rid of on Facebook as well as an internal monologue about how this generation is doomed to forever live with their parents. In *Precarious Inhabitants*, she presents “a series of works addressing issues of symbiosis and transformation between human, AI machines, animals, and other organic and synthetic bodies,” in which “impossible organic forms constantly evolve, mutate, and entwine.”

And in *BUT FOR NOW ALL I CAN PROMISE IS THAT THINGS WILL BECOME WEIRDER*, shown here, a narrator explains the rush of tricking a daily step counter with dancing. There's a sense of agency, physicality, and digital deceit. The computer can only see so much. To illustrate this, a gooey CGI hand mechanically, repetitively lifts a weight, but slows to a stop as increasingly long video clips of dancing feet at a nightclub are edited in. “Well this can be considered a successful night.” It's just one night, though. As time goes on mundanely, flies crawl over old mugs; abstract rave scenes pulse; a long pan over a very plain digital warehouse is subtitled “SOMETIMES I TAKE OFF MY GLASSES HOPING MY MYOPIA WILL SUCCESSFULLY HIDE THE DETAILS OF MY SURROUNDINGS.” Anxiety spikes as physical and digital trash floats through subways and oceans, verbs and articles break loose from complete sentences: “THE ACCELERATION OF SCROLLING / THE FEAR OF ONESELF / THE WAY YOU LOOKED AT ME THE NEXT MORNING / THAT WOMAN WHO CLIMBED STATUE OF LIBERTY / THIS EXTREME HEATWAVE.” The animations become darker and more grotesque, the narration more hopeless. Myopia won't be a sufficient salve.



LaTurbo Avedon explores authorship, form, and physicality through life as a digital avatar. There's presumably a real human behind the digital curtain, but Avedon exists, at least conceptually, as "a digital manifestation of a person that has never existed outside of a computer."

Are they so different than a friend you mostly communicate with online? "As a render, I am making my character not much different than most people, sharing pics, making things, and chatting via social media," says Avedon. They share artworks and opinions on Twitter and Instagram almost every day and has curated digital works from artists like Morehshin Allahyari, Claudia Hart, Kim Laughton, and Jonathan Monaghan in their "file-based exhibition space," Panther Modern.

And though their practice mostly takes place online, Avedon has exhibited internationally – at transmediale, NRW Forum, Museum Angewandte Kunst, CICA Museum, Newman Festival, NRW Forum, Transfer Gallery, Jean Albano Gallery, and Galeries Lafayette.

They call *Afterlife (beta)* a "cautionary look at toxic masculinity in cyberspace." In the short video, harsh light quickly flashes on and off over nude digital avatars and pointedly unrealistic representations of military tropes. 3D bodies are mapped, broken down into 2D flats, and glamorized as glistening, muscular statues, uncannily, impossibly smoothed over. These shots are interspersed with dioramas of figures that look like children's' action figures, placed in art galleries, beaches, and pastoral landscapes and posed in increasingly violent scenarios as the piece progresses.

Calling the piece a "beta" suggests the environment is a test to be released for review, in which the community can "work out bugs" in the system, writes Wade Wallerstein. "This is achieved by highlighting the frightening aesthetic forms that toxic masculinity takes in cyberspace, and inviting the viewer to think critically about what they experience online." As Avedon explains, "as virtual worlds release users from a need to mirror their corporeality, it is one of our few chances to deny this dangerous formula from following men as they enter a potentially eternal state of being...it is only a matter of time before archetypes in VR avatars emerge, tropes that we have a chance to address early on, rather than perpetually deal with." Avedon speculates a future where they might be able to make another iteration of this piece, one that recognizes alternative forms that people pursue beyond.

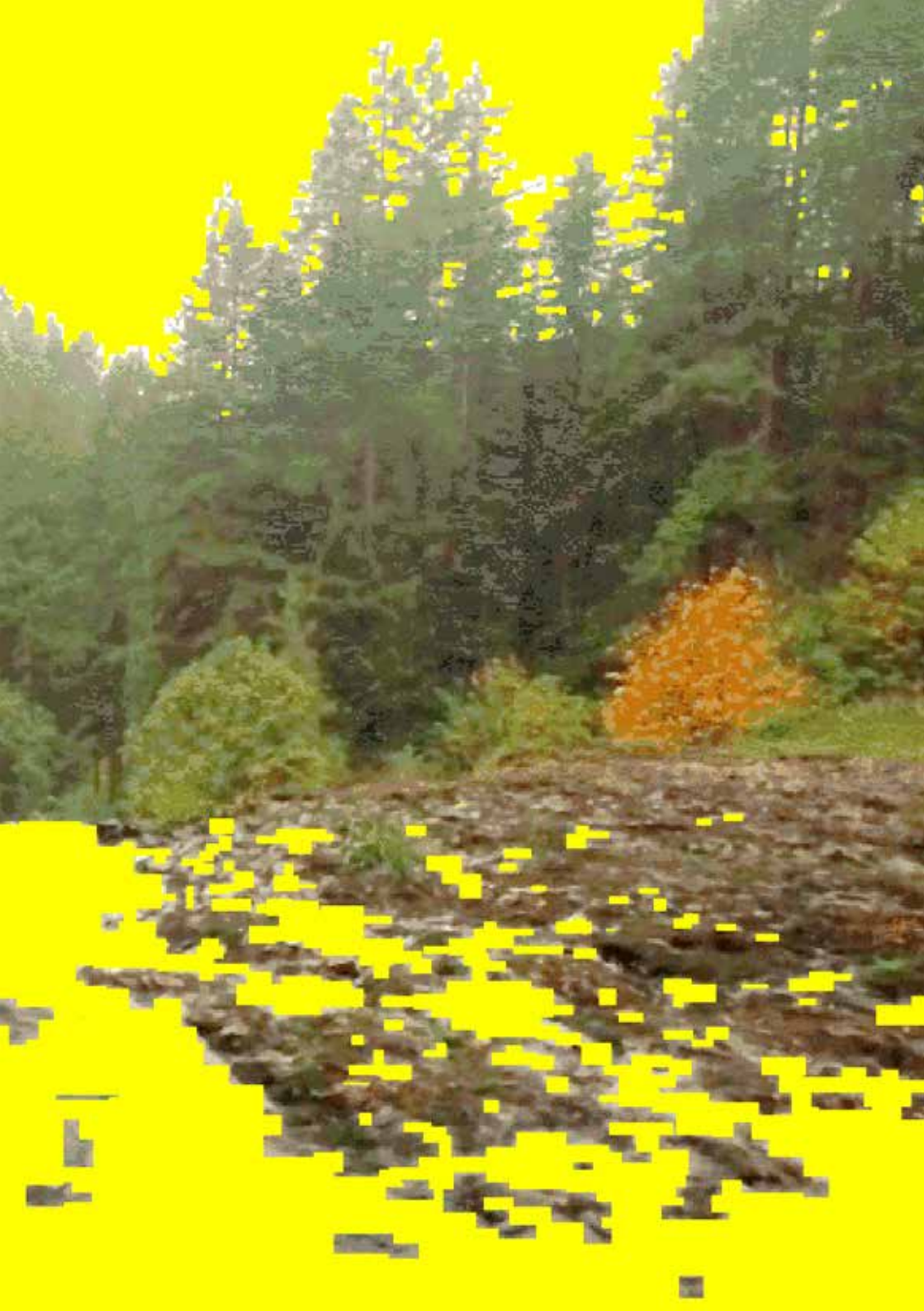


Lorna Mills has been obsessively appropriating and reimagining internet imagery since the 1990s. Her work, which often pulls pop culture and erotica into frenetic GIFs but also sometimes includes physical scanning and printing processes, has been shown at TRANSFER Gallery, Transmediale, DAM Gallery, HeK, Carroll / Fletcher, Chronus Art Center, the Wrong Biennial, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Mills has led the charge on new possibilities for the presentation of GIF artworks, bringing the medium to public exhibitions like Time Square Arts' Midnight Moment program and unlikely spaces such as the Museum of the Moving Image's elevators.

In 1990 she was a founding member of the Red Head Gallery, an artist-run gallery in Toronto. It was then that she started exhibiting cibachrome printing, painting, super 8 film, and digital video animations; and joining artist, writer, and curator Sally McKay's blog, Digital Media Tree, encouraged her to make more of her own digital graphics. She's since become a pioneer in net art, not only producing her own pieces but also compiling iconic works like the series *Ways of Something*, which was shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art and added to their permanent collection.

"I always consider myself working when I'm online," Mills says. For her, there's no distinction between mindless browsing and intent searches for specific material—you never know what you might find. She sources images from Reddit, Google+, Porn Fail, and Russian sites and takes clear delight in "internet filth" but also gives careful attention to mundane imagery we might not normally think twice about. Her four-channel work *Yellowwhirlaway* is characteristic of her GIF-based work. It layers looping animations of found imagery like muscle cars, cyclones, and dismembered bodies until the collective effect turns intangible, anxious, and outrageous.





Morehshin Allahyari unearths artifacts of an older world — ancient sculptures, Iranian conservatism, Middle Eastern spirit figures — then reimagines them for brighter, weirder, more participatory alternative futures. The speculative archaeologist has won significant attention, from her installation at The Armory Show 2018, to artist talks at the Tate Modern, to Eyebeam and BANFF residencies, to being named one of *Foreign Policy's* 100 Global Thinkers of 2016, plus countless other appearances and cultural contributions.

3D printing Digital fabrication forms a major part of her practice. In 2015, she and Daniel Rourke released *The 3D Additivist Manifesto*, a call to harness 3D printing as an artistic, speculative practice. In 2016, after over 100 collaborators shared files for printing, reading, cooking and living “in this most contradictory of times,” Allahyari and Rourke edited and compiled *The 3D Additivist Cookbook*. In their introduction, they write: “Recipes are one of the primary modes of making, learning, sharing, and revising (im)possible worlds.” This type of creation is Allahyari’s specialty.

Her project *Material Speculations: ISIS* presents 3D-printed replicas of structures destroyed by ISIS in 2015. She painstakingly researches and recreates them, then embeds them with archival data and shares her CAD files widely online. The subject matter is dark, but its expression is hopeful and inventive, rather than nostalgic. “With each download to a hard drive, the narrative rewrites itself,” writes Paul Soulellis. “How might we characterize these copies? Will the sculpture of King Uthal be brought back to life? Perhaps, in the same way that a meme is alive. As the files are posted, downloaded, and printed, different each time, the nature of the thing remains unsettled.”

Her *Dark Matter* series 3D-prints humorous hybridizations of the commonplace objects forbidden in Iran: Barbies, neckties, dogs, dildos, satellite dishes. The pieces middle-finger the oppressive regime she grew up under (she moved from Iran to the U.S. in 2007), but also meditate on how alternative contexts reshape the meaning of such objects.

At the 2018 Armory Show, Upfor Gallery presented 4 selections from *She Who Sees The Unknown*, an in progress series of 12 female icons inspired by Middle-Eastern and North-African jinn, or figures that represent possessive spirits. Here we see Aisha-Qandisha, a mythological, seductive female figure from Moroccan folklore known as ‘the opener’ who possesses men and cracks their body open to an ‘outside’. In her video of Aisha Qandisha, Allahyari -in her words- “uses Aisha’s power and possession to re-visit a personal love story; as a process for opening, closure, revenge, healing and forgetting.”

She is a “re-figure” of the female form with goat-like legs and hooves, a reimagining of past and future bodies.

In the last 18 months, Allahyari has created different components of this project including 3D printed sculptures, a series of video essays for each figure, public events, and a growing archive of images and text using these female/queer monstrous figures as a means to explore the catastrophes of colonialism, patriarchy and environmental degradation in relationship to the Middle East. She describes her open-source, informative practice as a counterexample to “digital colonialism” — the digitization of historic cultural sites in a way that is not open to the public. And in her artistic refiguring and fabulation, she draws on feminist traditions of building alternative narratives of the past and the future.



As Pussykrew, Ewelina Aleksandrowicz and Andrzej Wojtas create multimedia installations, 3D animations, and audio-visual experiences and sculptures that challenge the typically male aesthetics of science fiction and futurism.

“We need to communicate that there are different kinds of futures,” says Aleksandrowicz. Their interest in depicting queer bodies and organic, sensual, biological cyborgs comes through in work they’ve shown at esteemed art institutions like Saatchi Gallery London, Berlin Art Week, Postmasters Gallery, The Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai, Transmediale, and Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art as well as in collaborative projects they’ve done with partners interested in expanding boundaries like Adidas, Converse, Chromat, Hugo Boss, and Owsia and musicians like Angel Haze, Kelela, and Sevdaliza. Having one foot in fine art and another in mainstream media gives them a wide variety of platforms on which to project more femme futures.

Pieces like *Robot Love is Queer ‘R L I Q,’* a 3-channel CGI video which was first shown as a projection at NADA Art Fair, create hypnotic meditative spaces for viewers to contemplate how post-gender augmented organisms might transcend our current understandings of technology, love, and consciousness. Alien forms entwine and blur into one another, gently melting together in slow, repeated collisions. Boundaries, if they exist at all, are tenuous and temporary.

Meanwhile their commercial work allows them to sneak simpler feminist themes into mainstream media. “We’re the channel of communication that puts feminine & fluid energies into all types of design,” says Aleksandrowicz. For a Cadenza video, they advocated for female protagonists. An Adidas campaign gave them the opportunity to depict athletes of color as powerful, inspirational role models. Sometimes their influence is as simple as getting more women into the industry. For an AlunaGeorge music video, they convinced the electronic duo to film a gang of female motorcyclists; some of the women who were “discovered” through that project went on to appear in videos for Pharell and other mainstream artists.

In *the bliss of metamorphosing collapse*, the duo is very subtly merging some of the sensibilities of their work in fine art and commercial entertainment and game development. The queered alien world that was just hinted at through abstractions in *Robot Love is Queer ‘R L I Q,’* is now an immersive environment of real—but imperfectly-scanned—places and digital sculptures sculpted in Oculus Medium. Creatures crawl through what looks like a post-apocalyptic but exceedingly calm environment. Waves crash softly near a motorcycle that looks to have been frozen and mutated mid-flight. The scene is rich with suggestions of recent dramas and possibilities for new adventures, but it’s not interactive. The viewer is frozen in time like the curious objects and bodies, wondering what happened before and waiting to see what might happen next.



Sabrina Ratté's single-channel videos, installations, sculptures, live performances, and prints explore the fine line between virtual and physical realms. Using video synthesizers and 3D animation, she creates imagined architectures and uncanny textures that have appeared at Material Art Fair, Dolby Gallery, Young Project Gallery, Whitney Museum of American Art, Variation Media Art Fair, Chronus Art Center, Paddles On! Digital Art Auction at Phillips, HEK, and the Museum of the Moving Image, to name a few.

"I feel that reality is a vast and wild canvas on which each of us project our own subjectivity," says Ratté. "Video is, for me, a way to appropriate this abstract reality and make it my own, while leaving it open to new questions and interpretations. This parallel reality is in fact my own way of navigating this world, and creation helps me to open new doors and investigate new potential for reflections."

Though her work is grounded in digital media, physical spaces are some of her primary reflection points, whether it's corporate domains like airports or storefronts, parks and gardens "where nature is organized and meet formal architecture," or "any spaces that create a sense of contrast, a tension between aesthetic choices and daily life." Mostly, says Ratté, "I am drawn by any architecture that leaves room for the imagination to wander."

Biomes, a series of 4 paintings that use digital and analog video techniques to simulate painterly effects on soft, harsh, matte, and shiny surfaces, is an example of Ratté's interest in imaginative wandering. In each surrealist landscape, inspired by Tanguy and Kay Sage, "a mysterious entity is adapted to the strange climate," portraying "post-human environments where uncanny life forms materialize and slowly detach themselves from the horizon, to finally melt into their respective landscapes," says Ratté. "For me, *Biomes* is a series of surrealist landscapes with their own laws of nature."



BIOME III
Single-Channel Video with Audio (2017)



Snow Yunxue Fu merges painterly ideas of the sublime with experimental digital media, using topographical computer-rendered animation installations to probe physical and metaphysical limits. Her digitally-constructed liminal interiors engage a metaphoric relationship with physical perception, and have appeared at the Venice Biennial of Architecture, Thoma Art House, The Other Art Fair, Shenzhen Independent Animation Biennial, The Wrong Biennial, Kunsthalle Detroit, and more.

Fu originally trained as a painter. (The National Museum of China even acquired one of her early pieces in 1994, making her the youngest artist represented in the museum's collection.) Though she now works primarily in Maya and Reaflow software, Fu carries an appreciation for the multicultural history of landscape painting with her as she expands it into a contemporary context: her CGI animations and VR experiences are inspired by both the allegorical, romantic paintings of Caspar David Friedrich and the traditional Chinese landscape paintings that blur individual and linear perspectives in voluminous “virtual” space.

Karst is a series that pushes the boundaries of landscape art by putting natural ecologies and human environmental interventions in dialogue through immersive VR, exploring a “techno sublime” experience that she commissioned Daniel Brookman to score in the style of *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Karst environments are cave systems that form over thousands of years as water slowly dissolves rock—a timeframe that human minds can't meaningfully grapple with. But the typical cave tour—the type Fu remembers from her childhood in Southwest China—is heavily mediated by contemporary human interventions. Tourism departments string up garish, high-saturation lighting along predetermined paths, creating an effect that feels simultaneously claustrophobic and expansive, theatrical and earthy.

Fu set out to recreate that duality in her virtual piece, explaining “The experience in the digital cave attempts to embody the concept of Plato's cave in the medium of [a] virtually contracted realm, providing a contemplative environment for the visitor to wonder; walking and teleporting within the control of the wireframed virtual hands that are given to them.”



Episode 10: Simulation Argument

*From The End Of The World with Josh Clark,
a production of HowStuffWorks/iHeartRadio.
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Anyone can say that we are living in a simulation, just like anyone can say that we are living in “real” reality; neither one means anything as they’re both just assertions. But the idea that we are living in a simulated reality actually has a leg up over thanks to probability.

Back at the beginning of the year 2000, the software company Maxus released The Sims, a life simulation game where you, the player, controls individual simulated people. The Sims, as one reviewer put it, is a celebration of the mundane - sim’s go about their lives, they go to work ,they clean their toilets, and they die.

The Sims became an enormously popular game. Between 2000 - 2010, 125 million copies of the game were sold around the world. Each time one of those people brought their CD-Rom home, loaded it into the tray and booted up the software, a new iteration of The Sims universe was created. It was the same universe, it followed the same rules, it followed the same physics and logic, and The Sims all navigated their universe made up of the same set of possibilities. But each iteration was distinct and different; each one was a discrete version of The Sims’s universe and we can expect something along the same lines as anything our ancestors might run - whether it’s a scientific model for an anthropological study of history, or whether its the software of a popular game, whether it’s a class project, each time that simulation is run, a new iteration of our simulated human universe is created.

Say that at some point in the future, across the billions of years, amongst the trillions of people yet to come, there’s a ten year period where an ancestor simulation software that is equally as popular as The Sims is created and sold. As all those future humans load their simulations, a new iteration of our simulated universe is born, each following the same guidelines, the same code, each taking radically different course within the same set of prescribed rules. If we are agreed that our descendants will run

ancestor simulations of us, and that we don't have any frame of reference to distinguish the simulation from "real" reality, and in the future 125 million iterations of that simulated universe are run, then you and I, and everyone alive in our universe, has a 1 in 125 million chance that we are actual humans, 1 in 125 million chance that we are not simulated. Or to put it somewhat less encouragingly, there is a 99.999992% chance that we are simulated humans living in an ancestor simulation being run in the future. Because there was one iteration of humans in real life, there *is* a chance that we are members of that genuine human race as we like to think of ourselves.

Because so many simulations are run in the future, given that we have no frame of reference to tell us any difference between our reality and basement reality, that utter lack of signs that we live in a dream as Descartes suggested, the chances are vastly greater that we are simulated rather than real - there's just simply been more simulated humans than real ones. Being members of one group or the other, the chances state quite plainly that it's likelier we're members of the simulated group. You can mess with the numbers either way, to make the chances go up or down, but say that ancestor simulation was way more popular than The Sims ever was, and an equal amount of copies are sold each decade for 100 years, that would mean that we had one chance in over a billion of being a human, and so on. Each new iteration of our simulated universe lowers the chances that we are real, but even just one ancestor simulation run in the future activated the simulation argument; even if just once in the whole history of the human race, only one iteration of our simulated universe is run, we still have even odds that we're simulated. If we make it through the Great Filter¹, and our ancestors run simulations of us, we have at best a 50% chance of being real humans.

¹See here for further reading by Robin Hanson - <http://mason.gmu.edu/~rhanson/greatfilter.html>
And further reading by Nick Bostrom <https://nickbostrom.com/extraterrestrial.pdf>

TRANSFER

TRANSFER is an exhibition space that explores the friction between virtual studio practice and its physical instantiation.

The gallery was founded in 2013 to support artists making computer-based artworks, by installing solo exhibitions of experimental media art. In 2016 the gallery shifted to focus programming on solo shows from women refiguring technology, and began traveling a new virtual exhibition format called the 'TRANSFER Download'.

In TRANSFER's first five years, the gallery produced over 60 exhibitions of experimental media art in NYC and abroad, including international exhibitions, pop-ups and art fairs. In 2019 the gallery is relocating from Brooklyn, New York to Los Angeles, California.

TRANSFER is independently owned and directed by Kelani Nichole.

transferyallery.com

arebyte Gallery

Following in the long tradition of artists experimentation with new technologies, arebyte Gallery has led a pioneering art programme in its London gallery since 2013, to much acclaim.

From web-based work to multimedia installations including Virtual/ Augmented Reality, Artificial Intelligence, Computer Generated Images and 3D printing, the gallery commissions multiple voices in digital culture from emerging, as well as more established artists, across the UK and internationally.

At the forefront of today's digital art scene, arebyte has been listed as one of the seven best new galleries in London by Time Out (2018) and curated the UK's first Yami-Ichi at Tate Modern (2016).

Its art programme has been praised in major press including BBC, Sky News, Fox News, The Guardian and VICE.

arebyte.com

2019 Programme:

home

arebyte Gallery's 2019 programme takes the idea of home as its point of departure. Continuing on from last year's theme Islands, the programme this year extends towards the peripheries and returns to the centre, becoming more personal and abstract in the process.

The programme reflects upon ideas of redevelopment of urban spaces and otherworldly sites of discovery, the disconnection of marginalised bodies, new ecologies for future ways of living and looking beyond locality as a means of integrating change, as well as resisting the homogeneous nature of corporate systems and challenging ideas surrounding labour, leisure and existence.

Home is relational, emotive, nostalgic and warm, but equally can be impossible, scary and unstable. The artists in the programme disrupt and confront the limits of what these situations mean in our present, our future and our digital homes.

Thinking about recent western-global political and social upheavals, the artists embrace and subvert technology as their means of interrogation, and posit new ideas to imagine our collective, prospective futures. Within the exhibitions, spaces of home are unpacked as spaces of transition - of gender, religion, futures and reality - but also spaces of resistance and power.

With an increased use of sharing economies, and the rising number of people working from home, our relationship towards the objects we spend time with have changed and as a consequence so too have the communities and lifestyles we operate within. The home itself becomes a consumer entry point for a vast new economic territory of invisible infrastructure of big data, with the monopolising of private activities to benefit corporate advancement as the overbearing approach. The rules governing the space of everyday life now exist through this colonising of privacy.

Through this questioning of corporate systems, political ideologies, industry and freedom, the programme ruminates on fact and fiction, on histories and futures, and on belonging and alienation. The home becomes a metaphor for thinking about the future of our societal advancement, economic drives and consumer-led lifestyles. Home is a way to speculate on fictions for prospective ways of alternative living and thus acts a framework for enabling and empowering communities both in real life and online.



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