



29 JUNE –
27 SEPTEMBER 2023
Online

CURATED BY
TINA SAUERLAENDER

ORGANIZED BY
THE MACKENZIE ART GALLERY

EXHIBITION DEVELOPMENT
CAT BLUEMKE AND JONATHAN CARROLL

**ECHOES FROM THE FUTURE : SPECULATIVE CREATURES
AND POST-HUMAN BOTANICALS**

Artist Sabrina Ratté with curator Tina Sauerlaender

Tina Sauerlaender: Hello, Sabrina.

Sabrina Ratté: Hi Tina.

Tina Sauerlaender: Sabrina, in the exhibition we present your installation *Floralia*. We dive into dark space in which we encounter display between that are illuminated and that contain different plants and flowers. What is the topic of *Floralia* and why is it important for you?

Sabrina Ratté: Yes, *Floralia* is actually a project that has been inspired by many ideas theories and science fiction.

For example, I was really much into reading *Sitting With the Trouble* at the time by Donna Haraway I got really inspired by specific quotes that informed the images that I created. She has a beautiful way with words that evoke images. And for me it was very inspiring to create these images based on these quotes.

But it's also inspired by science fiction, the science fiction of Greg Egan, for example, that speculate that one day we could digitize our mind and live in this virtual world. And I was very much fascinated by this idea of archives, of these archives of the world that we have known in the physical reality that we could only be now experienced through 3D models and virtual archives.

So it's kind of a mix of both ideas, both approaches. It was also a way for me to kind of approach the subjects of anthropocene in a more poetic way, trying to find my own way to enter this very difficult subject. And so *Floralia* is all of these things It's a lot of important topic for me in this project.

Tina Sauerlaender: Great. And why did you choose flowers? Is it also a certain archive you're referring to?

Sabrina Ratté: Actually I am for the plants that are in the videos. These were inspired by my experience during the pandemic where I had the chance to be in the country in France. And I was also exploring different techniques such as scanned 3D photogrammetry and so I chose Kind of plants that are everywhere in our surroundings that maybe we take for granted, you know, like roses or hydrangea or simple trees and ferns.

And trying to imagine that maybe in the future we would not have access to these plants anymore. Maybe they would have disappeared. And there's something very anguishing about this idea. But the fact that I use these beautiful plants is also a way to create this tension between a distressing reality of losing these plants, but also being in this beautiful

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environment that is all digital. And I do like this ambiguity.

Tina Sauerlaender: Yes, I like very much that you're addressing these topics of the Anthropocene with such a beautiful topic, which is not frightening. I love that. So would you say you also try to create your own archive or is it about speculating about digital versions of the plants?

Sabrina Ratté: Yeah, I think it's a speculative archive. The idea of archive, speak of the past of something that have maybe disappeared and that we keep and in this kind of idealized bubble like this was this plant and we, we kind of celebrate that past and it's the fact that these plants are actually still existing today and we are projecting ourselves in this speculative future, to me was a way to it mixing the past, present, and the future in this very simple concept .

Tina Sauerlaender: Yeah, you're not doing a one-to-one reproduction of the plans, but you're use other visual strategies, more abstract visual strategies. Mm-hmm. Can you talk more about the way you create your visuals?

Sabrina Ratté: Yes. So these are, as I mentioned, the 3D scans. It's a way to bring in elements from reality, the physical reality that is very much realistic and bring it into this virtual world, digital world where I can completely transform the surroundings and even the, the matter itself.

So for example, used the idea of making those plans explode because it's a nice way to create

some kind of aleatory movement and create some surprise in the process and in this not unexpected composition. To me this also symbolized this idea that we can enter inside of the intimacy of the plant and these sounds that are reminiscent of the surroundings of the plant at the time.

So this was one way to really be immersed in the reality of that plant. So that's one strategy that it was used. I also used some video synthesizers, so that's a tool that comes from early video art, working with electricity and very much ingrained in my practice.

And for me it's a way to work with this very abstract matter, which is electricity. And in the context of this project, it's reminiscent of a hologram, a bit like a vision of the past of what holograms would have been. Just this electricity that surrounds us also and link us together this very abstract manner.

Tina Sauerlaender: That's really beautiful. I love very much the way of installing *Floralia*, how the plants explode and come out of the vitrines. It's things you could not display like this in physical life. It's very unique to the digital conditions. Mm-hmm. Did you ever think of bringing *Floralia* in a physical show and physical matter, or sometimes a hybrid of both worlds to present *Floralia*?

Sabrina Ratté: Yes. *Floralia* is a very particular kind of work. I've shown in a very different context mostly as video installation.

There's also a wallpaper that is displayed behind me, which is all of the plants together where I've put them in a different composition.

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So mainly it's been shown as video installation, but the work also exists as a virtual reality project, which was very important for me because it really addresses this question of us losing our body and being just a digitized consciousness. So it really made sense for me to bring this into virtual reality projects. So yes, it can have many, many manifestations, many ways of showing the work.

Tina Sauerlaender: Yeah, exactly. And would you consider this possibility of showing artworks in general in, in versions, in different contexts.

You know, pointing out different ideas, also communicating differently to the viewer. Would you say this is a special condition of the digital and would you say this is very important for you?

Sabrina Ratté: To show my work in different context and how it affects the viewer point of view?

Tina Sauerlaender: And that you can always have different versions of one work and depending on the context you show it.

Sabrina Ratté: Totally. I think of my work as very adaptable, and flexible, and malleable in some ways, just like the digital medium is you know, pixels and electricity.

You can expand them in much different forms and so much potential in there. So, to me, it's totally relevant and even important to show my work in different contexts. It's part of the concept from the beginning. Yes.

Tina Sauerlaender: I see. And how did you come up with the title of *Floralia*?

Sabrina Ratté: *Floralia* is a festival in ancient Rome for nature and spring and for the goddess Flora. And I think it was a very decadent festival, like a huge party. And I did like the idea, you know, of celebrating nature and Flora and but in a very different context, you know, in this idea that this nature has disappeared and only exists in this digital world.

So it's this dialogue or dichotomy that I am looking for, which is a mix between something very festive or utopian meeting this distressing dystopia in a way. And you're not sure where you stand in between.

Tina Sauerlaender: Yeah, that's true. You are just immersed and you can fully enjoy the work and reflect on it. What are your next projects and your upcoming shows, do you have other shows to install *Floralia*?

Sabrina Ratté: Yeah. Well, at the moment I have a big solo show here in Montreal at Arsenal Contemporary Art and where I show *Floralia* on the biggest wall I've ever shown before, the wallpaper is huge.

And I also show some work in Germany until August sixth. It's in Esen at the Zollverein UNESCO World Heritage, and it's part of the New NOW Festival who commissioned this my latest work called *Influorescence*. So you can see that until the end of the summer and in the next year, I have a solo show coming up in Winnipeg, in Canada.

And I will be part of different festivals group shows, one in Germany as well at the Max Ernst Museum, which will be interesting

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because they're making this parallel between,
surrealism and digital art.

Tina Sauerlaender: Sounds awesome. Sabrina,
thank you for being part of the show with
Floralia.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Sabrina Ratté's practice focuses on the multiple manifestations of the digital image: analog video, 3D animation, photography, printing, sculpture, virtual reality and installation. The constant integration of new techniques allows her to explore the themes that run through her work in ever-changing forms: the influence of architecture and the digital environment on our perception of the world, the relationship we have with the virtual aspect of existence, the fusion between technology and the organic world. Her works are situated halfway between abstraction and figurative, landscape and architecture, and on the thin line that separates the real from the virtual.

sabrinaratte.com

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Tina Sauerlaender (she/her) is the co-founder and co-director of the exhibition platform and international [collective](#) of independent curators, [peer to space](#) (since 2010). She has been curating and organizing large-scale group exhibitions like [Resonant Realities](#) (Exhibition of the VR ART PRIZE by DKB in Cooperation with CAA Berlin, Haus am Lützowplatz, Berlin, 2021), [The Unframed World. Virtual Reality as Artistic Medium for the 21st Century](#) (HEK Basel, 2017), or initiated and co-curated [SPECULATIVE CULTURES. A Virtual Reality Art Exhibition](#) (Kellen Gallery, Parsons/The New School, New York, 2019). She focuses on the impact of the digital and the internet on individual environments and society, on virtual reality in visual arts, and on exhibition making in [virtual realms](#). She is also the artistic director of the [VR ART PRIZE by DKB in Cooperation with CAA Berlin](#). She is co-founder & CEO of [Radiance VR](#) (since 2017), an international online platform and research database for virtual reality experiences in visual arts that includes the [Radiance VR App](#) for VR Art for Meta Quest headsets.

She holds a PhD from The University of Arts, Linz, Austria. The title of her dissertation is *PERFORMING IDENTITIES. Self-Representation in Art from the Renaissance to Virtual Worlds*. In conjunction with her PhD she curated the online exhibition [performingidentities.net](#). She is a lecturer for Digital Art History at the University of Applied Sciences in Bielefeld, Germany. She gave talks on Virtual Reality & Art at re:publica (Berlin), ZKM (Karlsruhe), New Inc (New York), Kunsthalle (Munich), University of Applied Arts (Vienna), Digifest (Toronto), Technical University (Prague) or Roehrs & Boetsch (Zurich).

She is the founder of the [SALOON Berlin](#), the initial branch of the [SALOON Network](#), an international network for women working in art.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Echoes from the Future: Speculative Creatures & Post-Human Botanicals

Disruptive human activity threatens the Earth's ecological balance, eradicating biodiversity and shared resources. *Echoes from the Future*, curated by Tina Sauerlaender (peer to space), highlights artists working across diverse media to preserve nature, reveal environmental devastation, and speculate on future life forms. The virtual exhibition features work by artists Aviv Benn (ISR/UK), Laura Colmenares Guerra (COL/BE), Reiner Maria Matysik (DE), Sarah Oh-Mock (DE), Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes (CAN), Sabrina Ratté (CAN), and Tamiko Thiel (US/DE). In rendering current environmental issues visible within a virtual reality landscape, *Echoes from the Future* immerses audiences in alternative post-anthropocentric futures and speculative ecologies.

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ARTISTS

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Aviv Benn
Laura Colmenares Guerra
Reiner Maria Matysik
Sarah Oh-Mock
Sabrina Ratté
Tamiko Thiel and /p

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