



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 Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes with curator
Tina Sauerlaender**

Tina Sauerlaender: Hello, Bianca. Hi Bianca. In your installation, *Last Species on Earth*, we enter an organic hemisphere of biotope that preserves the last surviving specimens of plant and animal origin in incubation chambers. It is a complex world with different organisms and creatures. How did you develop the initial idea for your work?

Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes: In the development of *Last Species on Earth* I became really fascinated with the idea of GMOs, but not like the genetically modified organisms, but not like corn or soybeans, as most people know. There's an entire kind of underworld of transgenic animals. So like genetically modified animals.

Specifically, specifically one. So there's one called Enviro Pig which is this genetically modified animal. Which was created to emit less phosphorus, which is horrible for the environment if there's too much, but then beneficial if there's just the right amount.

So this pig was essentially created to also be good for the environment, but to be like meatier and bigger and tastier. Mm-hmm. And just the moral dilemmas with that just got me really thinking of what a world would be like if there were more genetically modified animals. And then with that, I got into the idea of post-Natural, which is essentially like a word that houses all of these ideas regarding GMOs. And there's a center for post-natural history in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and it's an entire

museum dedicated to GMO animals.

So with that, I was thinking of how I could. Create a project about the transgenic animals and like how humans play an integral role in their demise and also their creation and just nature in general.

Tina Sauerlaender: So luckily you did not mingle with nature, like with the pig, but you had the digital means to exactly do this. And this was also your starting point, right?

Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes: Essentially I wanted to explore the idea of what it would be like if animals evolved complete dominion and domestication, not naturally, but if they were to like physically evolve almost like into our bodies so this woman, in the first sequence essentially has like the natural world within her womb, but it's a way of Signifying how we are complete creators and destroyers of these worlds.

And in the speculative universe, we're essentially using creatures for entertainment. If you could go into a zoo and then not just view the animals, but actually become them. Like what would that be like?

Tina Sauerlaender: Maybe you can describe some of the creatures you've been creating and that we encounter in your installation in the show.

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

Artist Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes with curator Tina Sauerlaender

Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes: They would be the main characters. Yes. These two organisms, like they're two sort of cute, cuddly creatures. I wanted to create something purposely lovable and cute for us to relate to. I arrived at the conclusion of these two organisms after reading Donna Haraway's Companion Species in which she talks about specifically dogs and the whole domestication process of that and because I have a pug who is, I mean long history of inbred like pugs are just have so many health complications and it's all because we've just been inbreeding them.

And I love my dog, but I can't be oblivious to this. So I essentially had her in mind when I created these two organisms just to depict the domestication and breeding that happens in our daily lives. You know, dogs come from wolves originally. Which I just can't even think about when I look at my tiny funny looking dog.

But in a similar, in a similar way, the creatures I created almost in this world have become like household symbionts to adventure in. And that's what's happening in the film is you become a viewer half the time into what they're perceiving in order to Be a zoo attendee.

But also I made two on purpose because I was thinking in the installation, they're kept apart on purpose because of the idea of patented organisms. There are things like Monsanto does this with seeds that have like a Terminator gene.

So even if you wanted to plant that seed, it would never reproduce for free. So the idea of like patent organisms that can never reproduce for free because we've engineered them to never be able to have the most basic fundamental right. So there's two and they're kept apart because they can never meet one another and they'll never be able to reproduce. So I essentially created two for that very

reason.

Tina Sauerlaender: You have this feeling because it's really kept in this box, you understand that they cannot be together and that there's something wrong in it's behavior and it's habitat, It doesn't seem natural at all . And talking about us being zoo visitors, I think that's also an important point, which also makes a difference between watching the video and walking in your installation in a virtual show. It's maybe a strange phrasing, but instead of Just watching a video you installed your work for the first time with 3D models in the exhibition architecture in a landscape, and you had the chance to really tell a slightly different story and to arrange your work differently than as a video in physical space.

Can you tell us more about this process and how the installation came together?

Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes: Because it was my first time I approached it like a disassembling of the entire piece. I wanted to disassemble the entire world that I created. And like stripped it down so that viewers could feel like they were entering a zoo or kind of like really meandering at these objects.

In hindsight I wanted them to be animated. , but I think it worked out.

I think the thing that's really interesting about virtual exhibitions in this way is that you can walk around these otherwise untangible objects. I could make them into sculptures, but I think they would never have the quality that digital possesses.

I found it like a really, really interesting experience that I love seeing them in the virtual exhibition that way.

Tina Sauerlaender: What I very much love

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

Artist Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes with curator Tina Sauerlaender

about the virtual space is that you, you feel the sizes of the things and your world that you created in the video is so speculative.

It's so hard on the screen to guess sizes of objects because they mostly don't exist in the physical. And with your installation in a virtual, you finally can relate to the objects you've been creating with your own. Presence towards them. And I think that's a very beautiful and intense experience to also discover your beautiful sculptures you created they're so cool. So funny, so interesting. They, it's such a special aesthetics you're providing, I think it's just really awesome. I love that so much.

Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes: I'm happy that you said funny because that's what I was going for, I think. These topics are so unfunny, they're so dark that it's important to see it with a bit of humor, it's important to not laugh about the situation, but maybe that feeling will stay with you and like the happiness feeling and you'll wanna do something about it.

Tina Sauerlaender: I think that's really an important point of, of your work, but maybe also like a general approach of myself through the whole curation of the show, because many works have that they are.

Funny, you know, like Reiner's creatures are funny, Tamiko's, they like all installations, many of them are also funny or beautiful, you know, and I think it's important to also use beauty and humor to approach these topics, which are extremely sad and horrible. And also thinking of the future, you know, when you think about it.

Yeah. We species become extinct, that we live with plastic and our organisms. These are already sad things and we have to deal with it, and we can't always just deal with it in a serious and sad way. So, yeah, highly appreciated your

approach.

Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes: The whole theme, the underlying thing of that exhibition is almost like reworlding.

There's like two paths to take with that. There's seeing the world in a positive view, or the aftermath of what it could be like. And I think it's important to like re-world or to imagine worlds that don't exist in order to see our own.

Tina Sauerlaender: Exactly. Well, and now that you've been installing your work in the physical and in the virtual space, what are like the biggest advantages or disadvantages or, and what did you learn?

How will you proceed showing showcasing your work?

Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes: I think creating video works, installing them physically and then installing them virtually are, Three different avenues. I tried to approach the virtual as if it was physical. Mm-hmm. But I definitely think it's different and there's actually more to play with.

So something that I would change or a difficulty that I had was seeing the platform for what it was, which is a virtual platform where anything can possibly happen. And I disassembled things, but I think next time I'm gonna go crazier.

Tina Sauerlaender: Yeah. As you said, one limitation was also the, the animation that wasn't possible in this framework of this exhibition, you know? What are your upcoming shows and projects or what ideas you're working on at the moment?

Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes: I have an upcoming exhibition taking place at the SAT here in Montreal in August. I also have my first

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

Artist Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes with curator Tina Sauerlaender

solo show ever coming up in September at Center Optica also here. And it's gonna be in the 18th edition of *Momenta* biennale.

Tina Sauerlaender: Sounds awesome. Congratulations, Bianca. This is really, really cool. Thank you. Well I wish you much, much success for these wonderful shows and thank you so, so much for giving wonderful insights into your work.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Bianca Shonee Arroyo-Kreimes is a Montreal-based Costa Rican-Canadian digital media artist. Growing up on the edge of a rainforest nourishes her creative practice as her work strives to resurrect the meaning of nature's place in her own life now as both an urbanite and multidisciplinary artist. Within the virtual worlds she creates, 3D embodiments of organisms borrow shapes, colours, and stories from plants and animals within our own world, while remaining singular. This conscious decision is intended to inspire a newly discovered appreciation of the endangered, non-human world that humanity often takes for granted as her portrayals seek to embody humankind's seemingly objective and narrow misunderstanding of nature in this time of ecological crisis.

shonee.space

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.

29 JUNE –
27 SEPTEMBER 2023
Online

CURATED BY
TINA SAUERLAENDER

ORGANIZED BY
THE MACKENZIE ART GALLERY

EXHIBITION DEVELOPMENT
CAT BLUEMKE AND JONATHAN CARROLL

ARTISTS

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

SPECIAL THANKS

Canada Council for the Arts, Crystal Mowry
Additional support from MacKenzie Art Gallery Staff