

9 MAY –
11 AUGUST 2024
Online

CURATED BY
REA MCNAMARA

ORGANIZED BY
THE MACKENZIE ART GALLERY

EXHIBITION DEVELOPMENT
CAT BLUEMKE AND JONATHAN CARROLL

WAKE WINDOWS: THE WITCHING HOUR

Participating artist Rory Scott with curator Rea McNamara

Rory Scott is a multidisciplinary artist whose work utilizes animation, extended reality (AR & VR), and handcrafted means to create emotive environments and reimagined lives. Her project *Impermanence*, which began in 2010, is an ongoing documentation of her life and struggle with accepting change and mortality. One of the works from that series, *Impermanence | Lost Shelters* (2019), is featured in the exhibition.

Below is an edited and abridged interview I conducted with Scott via Zoom in June 2023 and via email in June 2024.

Rea McNamara (RM): How would you describe your creative practice? And how has it evolved since becoming a mother?

Rory Scott (RS): I consider my practice to be basically my life. Everything feeds into my art, and my art feeds into me since there's no distinction—I'm always working. I'm figuring out how to either express my ideas or work on myself in terms of thinking about my own patterns and how they relate to my changing as a person and how I channel that into my work. Whether visually or by trying to accomplish new things by just taking one thing at a time, cause there are some technical things: "Okay, this is complicated, you don't understand it now, but it's okay. One step at a time." It's just like stringing those pearls along.

In terms of my practice and before being a mom, I would spend 10 hours working on something. It was glorious! Now, it's completely shifted. Every moment is valuable, not just in terms of my work but in my life, too. And also in

thinking about my children, because once you have children, time passes by in a completely different way, and you're really watching them change in these small increments.

Like, suddenly, they're three inches taller. Suddenly, they know so much more. It's incredible to process time watching them.

RM: How do you weave all these concerns together?

RS: For me, I have a very multi-like focus, in terms of thinking about spirituality, art, my physical health, and what I'm trying to put out in terms of my essence into the world...so those are the things I'm always thinking about. I'm always thinking about humanity in terms of technology. All these things feed into my thinking regarding myself, my practice, and motherhood. Everything's interwoven. It's more of a fabric than something I can partition into different little boxes.

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RM: That's a beautiful ethos to have.

Your work is otherworldly but still attentive to intimate spaces—almost like interiority. What are you pulling from, aesthetically, in your animations?

RS: I'm very interested in both the space we occupy, and you know, definitely the space within our minds—our consciousness, the infinite nature of what exists outside of us and within us as well.

I also time travel a lot. So much of my early work involved me thinking about time in terms of all these places I have an attachment to and to which I may not have access very soon. For example, [*Impermanence* | *Lost Shelters* took place in] my grandmother's house, which was super magical and a place of great inspiration from my childhood.

RM: Let's talk about *Impermanence* | *Lost Shelters*.

The 2019 VR/360 film meticulously recreates your grandmother's living room, cataloguing its aesthetic influence upon your cosmically inclined work. In the exhibition, we feature the film alongside a curated selection of photographs illuminating your process-making, including photos you shot of the living room before your grandmother's passing and archived family photos.

Can you share more about how this personal history informed the work?

RS: [My grandmother's living room has] existed this way since, you know, the 1960s

and 1970s, like from when my dad was a child and is still the same when I go back there now. It's like this time capsule...it's weird to have these physical places that hold time. And then, you have these internal places that hold time that you can travel to. For my work's visuals, I borrow from thinking about the past and my childhood—the things I love like PBS and whatnot. And also from nature. I've always loved looking at the universe and macro-biology. Like microscopic stuff. So my work pulls from all of that, and I also think about reality existing as this multi-dimensional thing...coming presently now and thinking about my work [today], I'm [also] very interested in extended reality and thinking about [how] technology just mirrors what is already in existence.

RM: I've discussed with some of the other participating artists who are also parents how they navigate the promotional and networking demands of their work online, particularly on social platforms like Instagram and Discord, which can feel like you have to keep up with 24/7.

RS: It's hard.

RM: It's really hard! Could you describe those challenges and how you navigate them, especially with the everyday demands of being a mom?

RS: Yeah, so, you know, with Discord, it's just one of those things that [laughs] I engage [with] sometimes. It's kind of like with Twitter (X), too. There are these necessary things you have to be a part of, but at the same time, I can't go back and forth for a conversation for

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hours [laughs] and make sure I don't miss any messages. I have to forgive myself for that—I can only do so much. I look at everything as kind of like juggling balls: I gotta always keep three balls in the air, and that's the main thing. I'm always just juggling.

Right now, I feel like learning new stuff, especially with AI, and keeping up with what's coming up has been the most important. You have to see where you have your advantage or edge, and mine is learning stuff and being able to execute stuff really quickly.

And that's how I have been able to make connections. I think you just have to know what you're good at and what you feel good about because if you feel good about it and you're passionate about what you're gonna put that time into—you can't put your time into stuff that's going to kill your soul, even if [laughs] it may benefit you. It's really hard making that decision and making that call sometimes, but you've gotta be able to do that, and also realize that everything is in a shift. Maybe you don't have time for it now, but you'll eventually get into it. You just have to keep an awareness up.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Rory Scott is a multidisciplinary artist whose work utilizes animation, extended-reality (AR & VR), and handcrafted means to create emotive environments and re-imagined life. Through both digital and handmade means, Scott explores the ideas of impermanence, the passage of time and the impacts of technology on the evolution of humanity, as well as the important role that patterns play in shaping our personal and collective lives. Her project *Impermanence*, which began in 2010, is an ongoing documentation of her life and struggle with accepting change and mortality. Through recorded thoughts, sounds and the use of retro sci-fi imagery, her work confronts and reconciles the passage of time by juxtaposing the old with the new.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Rea McNamara is a writer and curator based in Tkaronto/Toronto. Her curatorial work has long been shaped by networked counterpublics' participatory cultures, particularly the collaborative processes of transformative fandom, alongside a social practice shaped by organizing community-based art initiatives. In her research, she often focuses on the emergence of otherness and hybridity within digital identity formations, informing an on/offline curatorial approach that connects and capacity-builds.

McNamara has previously held curatorial and public programming positions with the Gardiner Museum and Drake Hotel, and been awarded grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. She has curated and organized a range of exhibitions and public projects, including *dis-ease* (Vector Festival, 2021), *Obsessive Pop Tendencies* (Pleasure Dome, 2019), *Community Arts Space* (Gardiner Museum, 2016-2019), and *Safe Space* (Scotiabank Nuit Blanche 2024). In 2011, she founded the art party series *Sheroes*, which engaged with female celebrity fandom through music, performance, installation, and internet-based art. Her work has been presented at The Art Gallery of Ontario and is in the Whitney Museum of American Art collection.

Additionally, McNamara has written about art, culture and the internet for *frieze*, *Art in America*, *The Globe and Mail*, and been commissioned to write exhibition texts for Trinity Square Video, the Remai Modern, and Daniel Faria Gallery. From 2020-2021, she was the Emily H. Tremaine Journalism Fellow for Curators with *Hyperallergic*. She also gives talks, moderates panels, and lead workshops on fandom, curatorial practice, and the labour of mothering for The Toronto Public Library, Toronto Metropolitan University, NYU Tisch School of the Arts, and more.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Wake Windows: The Witching Hour

Led by a rebellious AI Chatbot, this interactive online exhibition guides viewers through interactive and time-based art by artists who are parents, caregivers, or educators who engage with public databases and "living archives." In touching on maternal world building and our ever-evolving relationship with AI, *Wake Windows: The Witching Hour* intends to make visible the missing datasets in our collective understanding of the often invisible labour that is mothering. From animations to machinimas or virtual reality (VR) to interactive narratives, the digital exhibition traces how the artists' creative outputs have shifted since taking on this care work. Curated by Rea McNamara, participating artists and collaborators include Claudia Cornwall, Alejandra Higuera with Magnolia Higuera, Faith Holland with Ben Bogart and Hildegard Holland Watter, Wednesday Kim, Lauren Lee McCarthy, Rory Scott, Skawennati, and Rodell Warner. *Wake Windows* is part of a series of digital exhibitions created through the MacKenzie Art Gallery's Digital Exhibitions Toolkit and Art Installation Launcher (DETAIL)—a newly developed resource championing the development of art exhibitions for digital platforms.

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Faith Holland with Ben Bogart and Hildegard Holland Watter
Wednesday Kim
Lauren Lee McCarthy
Rory Scott
Skawennati
Rodell Warner

SPECIAL THANKS

Cat Bluemke
Jonathan Carroll
Iain Soder
Claudia Cornwall
Rodney LaTourelle and Louise Witthöft
Geoff Yuen and Lee Froese of The Hatchery
Crystal Mowry
Nicolle Nugent
Jayne Wilkinson
Lisa Karen Cox
Onika Powell
Sharn Peters
Natalie Haddad
Rosemary Heather
Linda Wilson
Tony Halmos and Quincy Lou McNamara-Halmos.

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