

Immaterial Nature with Molior

A Virtual Reality Exhibition at the Livart Beginning March 24, 2023



Photo : *Autofading_Se disparaître*, Caroline Gagné

Montreal, March 2, 2023 - The virtual reality exhibition *New Surroundings: Approaching The Untouchable* makes its world premiere at the Livart Gallery in Montreal, from March 24 to April 30, 2023.

The exhibition, Molior's first in Quebec since 2016, features six virtual reality works, as well as installations and screen-based works, all by independent Quebec artists. They were selected by Montreal curator Nathalie Bachand for the way they question our relationship to nature in a context of accelerating climate and technological change.

"My hope is that this exhibition can help transform the way we see and interact with our natural environments. I think that virtual reality has this power to convey content that appeals to our perception in a more comprehensive, more total way" - Nathalie Bachand, Curator

The exhibition explores our world through a journey into the digital realm, where nature becomes both malleable and immaterial at the same time. Thus, it evokes distant and impalpable universes that are suddenly within reach, worlds where human destruction no longer takes place, and where, instead, our presence becomes one of growth and construction.

ARTISTS AND WORKS

Sabrina Ratté, *Floralia*, 2021

With *Floralia*, Sabrina Ratté proposes four nature scenes existing in a shared virtual space, a digital ecosystem that evokes the potential of digitizing nature in an ever more urgent need for conservation.

The artist uses her affinity for analog video, 3D animation, photography, virtual reality, and installation to create scenes that play with the boundaries of physical space. Viewers can observe all kinds of plants from as far or as close as they wish, giving the sensation of walking through either a greenhouse or a jungle, depending on their point of view. The work underscores the impact that our perspective of our environment can have on its preservation.

Olivia McGilchrist, *Virtual ISLANDs*, 2022

Virtual ISLANDs offers audiovisual interpretations of the ebb and flow of water. The installation invites viewers to explore the otherwise unreachable depths of the sea and navigate alongside the choreographed movements of Newfoundland dancer Keely Whitelaw, rendered as a particle effect.

The aquatic scene is activated by the subject's movements, which are themselves guided by those of the particles moving in unison. The work highlights the interconnectedness between human beings and nature, and explores the relationship between water and the fluidity of hybrid identities, inspired by the artist's dual Caribbean and European heritage.

Laurent Lévesque et Olivier Henley, *Le Conservatoire : autre horizon*, 2017-2022

Making its premiere at the exhibition, *Le Conservatoire : autre horizon* by Laurent Lévesque and Olivier Henley is the culmination of several years of collaborative work. The piece invites us to explore a virtual forest generated from a collection of over 270 plants taken from first-person shooter video games (including popular titles such as *BioShock*, *Borderlands 2*, *Mass Effect 2*, *Rune*, *Unreal* and *The Wheel of Time*) made between 1998 and 2017.

As the artists meticulously went through the thousands of files that make up these games in order to extract their plants, they also developed a detailed directory and collection policy for them, inspired by those used by botanical gardens. The rigor of their approach reflects their concern for preserving the flora of video games and, more globally, the enormous digital heritage generated by this important industry. By giving plants the chance to flourish in this contemplative space where human beings and violence are removed, the work allows us to explore our often destructive relationship to nature.

Caroline Gagné, *Autofading_Se disparaître*, 2020

Caroline Gagné's *Autofading_Se disparaître*, finalist for the 2022 Prix Videre Création in visual arts, begins in a virtual environment swept by wind and fog, a whirlwind of particles that calms down only when the viewers slow down their movements, or stand still even. The more they stay still, the more the peaceful forest becomes perceptible and its details multiply. This delicate tranquility collapses as soon as human presence becomes too pronounced.

This form of virtual interactivity may seem counter-intuitive, but the installation uses virtual reality, photogrammetry and non-linear sound composition precisely because they destabilize and question our presence in this environment. By making ourselves almost invisible, and thus allowing fragile sound "events" to appear, we acquire a renewed awareness of our body and its relationship with its environment.

François Quévillon, *Érosions 2*, 2022

The second iteration of a constantly evolving work, François Quévillon's *Érosions 2* invites viewers to explore spaces located along the coastline of the St. Lawrence River and Gulf, at the outer reaches of Quebec.

The artist draws on his interdisciplinary practice combining installation, sound, images, and photogrammetry with the volumetric and sound capture of coastal areas to recreate landscapes out of millions of little particles. Inspired by several months of research focused on the topography and richness of the St. Lawrence, and a desire to document the current state of the river and its erosion, François Quévillon plays with the feelings of disorientation and disembodiment caused by virtual reality by evoking the transformation processes of coastal landscapes.

Baron Lanteigne, *Ascension*, 2022

With *Ascension*, Baron Lanteigne invites viewers to lose themselves in an unreal environment where natural elements such as cliffs and bushes float in an ethereal space. These elements navigate between huge and incessantly blooming hands holding a device resembling a smartphone.

These devices exchange a flow of data, emerging from the screen like a bubbling liquid. The viewers can slow down the movement of this substance in order to better observe it, or let themselves be carried away by the dizzying acceleration of the scene. The work, created specifically for the exhibition, thus addresses the hyper-connectivity that characterizes our current relationship to the world and how this digital matter can blur the lines between reality, nature, and technology.



Photo : *Érosions 2*, François Quévillon

ABOUT MOLIOR

Molior is an organization specialized in the production of exhibitions and artistic projects using technology as a means of creation, expression, and action.

Since its inception in 2001, Molior has presented a number of innovative projects both in Canada and internationally, in collaboration with numerous distribution partners.

During the first lockdown, Molior became interested in virtual reality as a way to present exhibitions outside the usual circles of distribution, such as in libraries or remote areas. It is from this desire to encourage audience development and access to first-rate works that *New Surroundings: Approaching The Untouchable* was born.

More information on molior.ca/nouveaux-envrionnements/

- 30 -

Information and interview requests

Sheila Skaiem, publicist

sheila@avecsheila.com / 514 572-8687