

# **FRAGMENTED FLORA**

digital embodiments of being in time and space

by Alexandra Gregory

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## ABSTRACT

*Fragmented Flora: Digital Embodiments of Being in Time and Space* consists of the curation of a digital environment that utilizes the affective qualities of physical space; featuring an animated piece *Still life with fallen fruit* (2019) by Elisabeth Belliveau, the video *We Weight on the Land (Winter)* (2019) by Eve Tagny, interactive poem *Fin* (2018) and sound piece *xi xi 息息* (2019) by Xuan Ye, and a live stream floral installation *Flowers in Time and Space* (2021) by Hayley O'Byrne. This work problematizes the ways in which humans interact with and act upon matter by conceptualizing the ways in which permanence and materialism are discussed and valued, as they intersect with the digital. The theoretical grounds of the project focus on the concepts *materiality* (as it relates to how matter moves through, exists, and transforms in space); *temporality* (as it relates to decay); and *individuality* (as it relates to senses and sensory triggers). The curatorial methodology engages the challenge of evoking the tangible and affect of qualities of physical experiences through an online exhibition.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Although we're virtually spread across many places, this land acknowledgement is specific to Tkaronto (Toronto, ON) as that is the location where this research has taken place. OCAD U is located on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples. I choose to reside and create on this land with the knowledge that Indigenous people have been pushed out of Tkaronto and continue to be pushed out of the city. There are still Indigenous communities that do not have access to running water, little action being done to reconcile and investigate the over 1000 missing and murdered Indigenous women, and talk of reconciliation is not sufficient—action needs to be taken. Writing a land acknowledgement is never enough, especially as I inhabit a body that can easily access most of the privileges offered in Canada and I go to an institution that has paid millions of dollars to occupy the land. This resource acknowledges some of the folks and organizations who engage with decolonial and to make said work accessible.

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-74pLSXyOT1mxxgDthEKMnwiBaYj7i3k3kxi\\_zl7CG4/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1-74pLSXyOT1mxxgDthEKMnwiBaYj7i3k3kxi_zl7CG4/edit#gid=0)

## LAUDATIONS

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I appreciate the support that has been provided throughout this project by my cohort, friends & family—sorry for dropping off the face of the Earth.

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# EXHIBITION DOCUMENTATION

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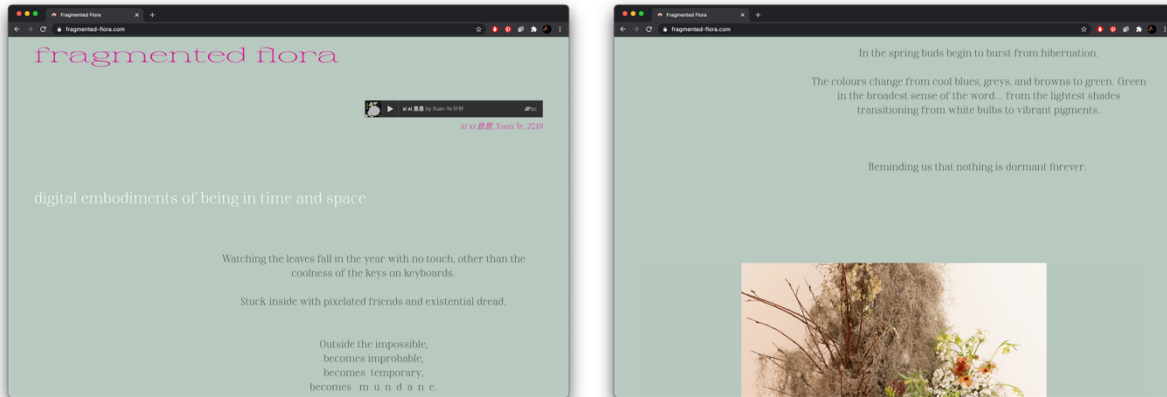


Figure 1. *Fragmented Flora Main Page*, 7.

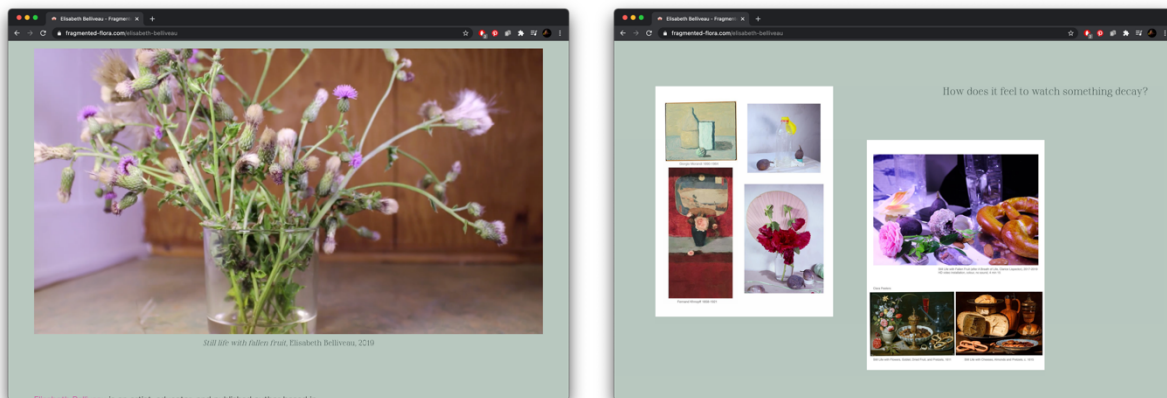


Figure 2. *Elisabeth Belliveau's Artist Page*, 7.

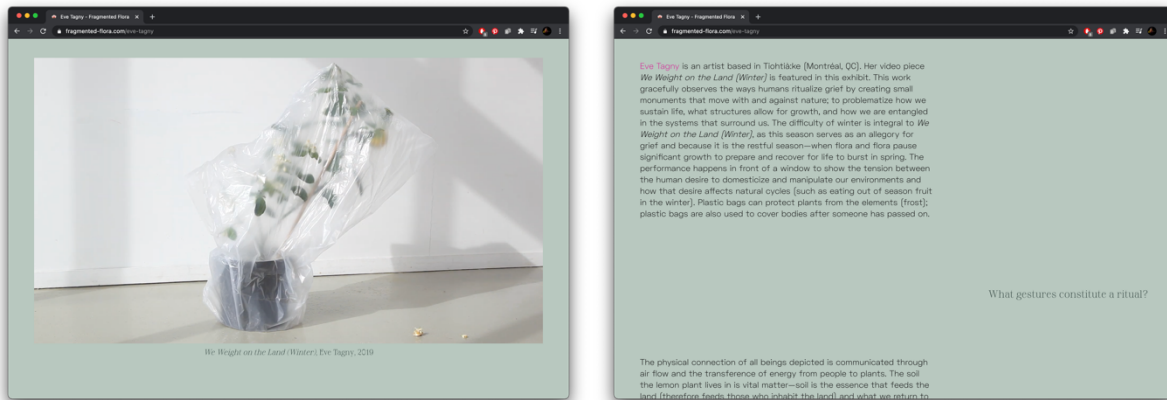


Figure 3. *Eve Tagny's Artist Page, 7.*

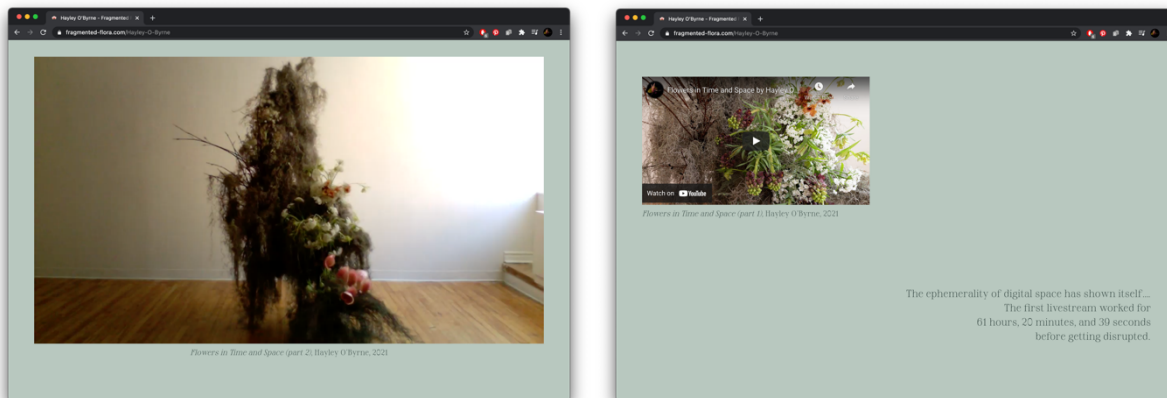


Figure 4. *Hayley O'Byrne's Artist Page, 7.*

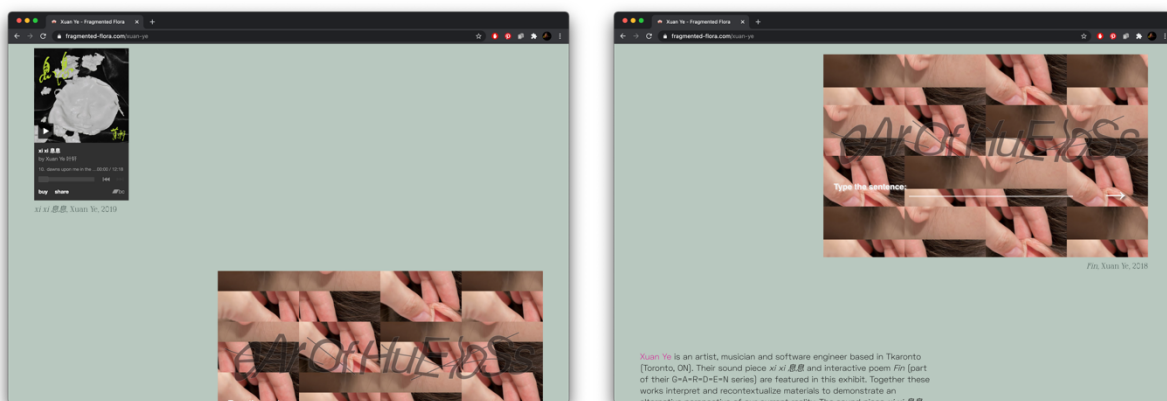


Figure 5. *Xuan Ye's Artist Page, 7.*

## CURATORIAL ESSAY

*Fragmented Flora* looks at our relationship to the digital sphere and the tangible qualities that are traditionally valued in western art and art institutions (figure 1). The flexibility inherent in the digital realm allows one to penetrate the virtual, where we do not need to be beholden to the constraints and order of time. By showing works that engage with temporality in distinct ways, one can draw connections between the exhibited artworks to reconsider our relationship to time and to the ways we perceive how matter exists in space. Elizabeth Belliveau's animation *Still life with fallen fruit* (2019) breaks down time, frame by frame, and rebuilds it (figure 2); Eve Tagny's video *We Weight on the Land (Winter)* (2019) takes footage and assembles it to create a mediative pace (figure 3); Xuan Ye's sound piece *xi xi 息息* (2019) and interactive poem *Fin* (2018) (part of their G=A=R=D=E=N series) construct environmental qualities of being lost in time (figure 5); the decay of Hayley O'Byrne's live stream floral installation *Flowers in Time and Space* (2021) expresses the linearity of time as it unfolds (figure 4).

The fragile nature of digital space resists the institutionalized western art tradition of conservation and preservation. Western notions of permanence are seen when artists immortalize live subjects in oil paintings and the basements of museums which act as mausoleums for works that are not on display and may never be exhibited. The history of western artists depicting flower arrangements in oil paintings juxtaposes the short lifespan of flowers, whose beauty is supposed to be fleeting. Superficially, digital depictions of organic matter seem to follow in the western art historical tradition of using art to immortalize organic matter. The digital world mirrors the fragility of life, as digital files, platforms, software, and hardware are extremely vulnerable to corruption and deterioration. The looseness and fluidity of organic matter creates tension with the "rules" (geometry, symmetry, algorithms, etc.,) of the digital realm.

The subject matter of all the artworks shown engages with how humans act upon nature—with or against. *Still life with fallen fruit* portrays the animacy of all things by reconceptualizing traditional still life, as well as composing organic and inorganic matter in ways that allow the viewer to see its vibrancy. *We Weight on the Land (Winter)* demonstrates the tension between bringing gardens into domestic spaces and the untameable essence of nature. *Fin* engages with the concept of habitat, issues with urban planning, and the integration of digital technology in domestic spaces, by using stock photos paired with the interactivity of the CAPTCHA poem. *Flowers in Time and Space* visualizes the human desire to manipulate our environment through a live stream that captures decay—problematizing what it means to watch something die.

# SUPPORT PAPER

## INTRODUCTION

*Fragmented Flora: Digital Embodiments of Being in Time and Space* consists of the curation of an online exhibition; featuring the animated piece *Still life with fallen fruit* by Elisabeth Belliveau, the video *We Weight on the Land (Winter)* by Eve Tagny, interactive poem *Fin* (part of their G=A=R=D=E=N series) and sound piece *xi xi 息息* by Xuan Ye, and live stream floral installation *Flowers in Time and Space* (2021) by Hayley O’Byrne. The curatorial essay conceptualizes the ways in which permanence and materialism are discussed and valued, as they intersect with the digital. The theoretical framework of the show is built on the three key terms *materiality*<sup>1</sup> (as it relates to how matter moves through, exists, and transforms in space); *temporality*<sup>2</sup> (as it relates to decay); and *individuality*<sup>3</sup> (as it relates to senses and sensory triggers). This framework allows the viewer to see the ways humans act upon matter, demonstrating the limits of the physical and the constraints of virtuality. This exhibition visualizes the ways humans construct the separation between the digital and natural spatial realms, leaving room for the possibility of reconstructing our perceptions of time and space. Due to our current circumstances much of the exhibition of art has been moved online, much of this content simply photographs artworks in a gallery setting—this forcible presentation of art is devoid of affect. However, there are problems with virtual space and the hardware that accompanies it; scrutinizing the positive and negative aspects of digital space allows one to reconceptualize an ethical and ecologically sustainable digital realm. The research questions guiding this thesis project are: *how does the creation of digital space affect the ways in which we experience art; how do you curate affective experiences digitally* (specifically thinking of affective qualities that evoke fleeting, rare, and special moments); and *why curate a digital space to exhibit art that depicts botanical matter?*

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<sup>1</sup> *Materiality* defines how matter moves through, exists, and transforms in space. Matter demonstrates the ways objects (in their presence and absence) construct space. Possessions do not only take up space in their volume, but in their materials. Every object has an origin: in raw materials, how the raw materials are combined, who combines them and the geological location where the materials are combined. Objects are created to serve a purpose, whether aesthetic or utilitarian. The purpose and origin of the object is significant to the space it occupies—further affecting our emotional space. Materials hold this knowledge. Sara Ahmed describes the importance of materiality by stating “we are moved by things. In being moved, we make things. An object can be affective by virtue of its own location (the object might be here, which is where I experience this or that affect) and the timing of its appearance (the object might be now, which is when I experience this or that affect)” (Ahmed 2010, 25).

<sup>2</sup> *Temporality* relates to decay; the ways materials are situated in space and how their occupation of space changes over time—specifically in regard to organic matter decomposing. Individuals experience their temporal constraints differently; one’s perception of time frequently matters more than the physics of time.

<sup>3</sup> *Individuality* relates to our senses what outside forces cause sensory triggers. As a person in the world we each have an individual physical presence. Our possessions are extensions of ourselves, which add to our physical presences. We move between places. We take up space in the places we enter. With each person we talk to we make an impression—lasting or not. These impressions multiply and create emotional bonds. These interactions take up emotional space. Emotions cannot be measured in volume—nonetheless, they take up space and have an affective presence. The average person is tethered to the digital realm, and whether we like it or not, our physical selves (and our material connections to the digital world) get embodied in virtual spaces. Emotional connections to physical places and the objects that occupy space are depicted and translated to digital space. The affective forces that inform an individual’s perception of matter are usually triggered by sensory experiences.



## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The first question guiding this project *how does the creation of digital space affect the ways in which we experience art* sets up the design parameters to distinguish this exhibition from online presentations of artworks that are only online as a result of the pandemic. Although this work is dependent on the virtual, it does not blindly appraise digital innovations and progress as beacons for an optimistic future, nor does it view digital space as a utopian dreamscape.<sup>4</sup> There are physical implications of virtual space that are harmful to people whose labour is required to mine rare earth materials<sup>5</sup> and assemble hardware<sup>6</sup>, these processes are detrimental to the earth's ecosystems. Virtual space is not neutral. Humans choose what information gets collected and how it gets categorized; if a system of collection is biased, the algorithmic data will display said biases.<sup>7</sup> In the age of the anthropocene, it is hard not to get trapped in the despair of the capitalist systems we are complicit in, while facing a potentially bleak future.<sup>8</sup> In digital space touch, smell, and taste are completely removed (exceptions for devices that vibrate).<sup>9</sup>

Our vision changes in digital spaces because the depth of field is flattened—all spatial awareness and perception of depth have to be simulated through the layering of visual elements. Colour correction is not solely controlled by the content creator, the colour settings are also

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<sup>4</sup> The podcast *New Ways of Seeing* has four episodes, "Cybernetic Forests", "Digital Justice", "Machine Visions", and "Invisible Networks"; each episode outlines the ways the digital harms people and the potential virtual space has to do good. James Bridle. *New Ways of Seeing*. BBC Radio 4. Accessed July 21, 2020.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000458m/episodes/player>.

<sup>5</sup> Todd C. Frankel, "The Cobalt Pipeline," *The Washington Post*, September 30, 2016, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/business/batteries/congo-cobalt-mining-for-lithium-ion-battery/>.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Whoriskey, "In Your Phone, In Their Air," *The Washington Post*, October 2, 2016, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/business/batteries/graphite-mining-pollution-in-china/>.

<sup>7</sup> The legitimacy of the virtual is illustrated in *Net Art Anthology*: "the viral cannot be called artificial or positioned in opposition to the real; the virtual exists in relation to the actual, and both virtual and actual are equally real" (Manuel, Bosma, and Driscoll 2019, 412). Social implications of the virtual are outlined in *The Museum is Not Enough*: "patterns can be seen by social media data-processing systems that can't be seen by the people that own those systems" (Borasi, Garutti, and Ferre 2019, 100). The physical complications with hardware are described by Susan Schuppli: "backup systems and software recovery programs exist not because of the unlikelihood of a fatal error, but because hard-drive failure can be calculated as a statistically probable event. The virtual is always real" (Schuppli 2020, 73). Potential political issues with physical data centres are described in *The Museum is Not Enough*: "massive data centres arrayed around the globe now contain billions of images and texts—and while they do not serve as archives in a public sense, they are physically accomplishing something similar, albeit often in service of private corporations" (Borasi, Garutti, and Ferre 2019, 126). Mark Fisher describes a different kind of virtual experience that problematizes the feelings of uncertainty: "the future is always experienced as a haunting as a virtuality that already impinges on the present, conditioning expectations and motivating cultural production" (Fisher 2012, 2).

<sup>8</sup> Hauntology describes nostalgia for a future that will never come. The reasons the future will not come vary, it can be as simple as it is impossible to imagine what will happen in the future; however, it can relate more deeply to the pursuit of the good life, as in hauntology describes nostalgia for a future that will never come because late capitalism has ruined our prospects. The affective presence of objects and places imprint on an individual's memory. The significance of the object to the individual dictates the duration that the object lingers in the person's memory. Belinda Kwan describes hauntology as "a philosophical concept that refers to the return or the persistence of elements from the past, like a ghost. First introduced by Jacques Derrida as a way to think about phantoms of the past are inherited by the present—not in such a way that the past is necessarily reproduced exactly as before, but also so that all present and future phenomena bear an uncanny and influential resemblance to the past" (Kwan 2020, PDF); Mark Fisher describes how hauntology feels as "what haunts the digital cul-de-sacs of the twenty-first century is not so much the past as all the lost futures that the twentieth century taught us to anticipate" (Fisher 2012, 2).

<sup>9</sup> Affect is as much of a sensation as a tangible thing. Brian Massumi describes affect as "the whole world: from the precise angle of its differential emergence. How the element of virtuality is construed—whether past or future, inside or outside, transcendent or immanent, sublime or abject, atomized or continuous—is in a way a matter of indifference" (Massumi 1995, 105).

dictated by the settings calibrated on the individuals device. Digital technologies have been designed to integrate very well with sound. The limitations to our senses while interacting with the digital interfaces and technologies require a shift in methodology to make up for the lacking sensorial elements.<sup>10</sup> In this thesis the sensory limitations in digital spaces have been compensated for by designing the exhibition with a clear interface and by coding interactive elements on the website to keep the user on the page. This project attempts to strike a balance between focusing on the individual's ability to view the project on their terms (and on their personal devices) and the myriad of distractions available on the internet.<sup>11</sup> The exhibition is free and available to the public on the internet—without the internet you cannot access *Fragmented Flora*. Simply being online does not make a digital project accessible as there are algorithmic barriers to finding information and physical barriers if one does not have access to high-speed internet and a device that connects to the internet. The internet allows this exhibition to break free from the laws of physics but not the structures of systemic bias.

To situate the exhibition within the myriad of cultural communities on the internet the question *how do you curate affective experiences digitally* (specifically thinking of affective qualities that evoke fleeting, rare, and special moments) became essential to connect the curatorial premise and the aesthetic presentation of the exhibited artworks. The flexibility inherent in the digital realm allows one to penetrate the virtual— we do not need to be beholden to the constraints and order of time.<sup>12</sup> By showing works that engage with time in distinct ways, one can draw connections between the exhibited artworks to reconsider our relationship the ways we perceive how matter exists in time and space. Belliveau's animation *Still life with fallen fruit* breaks down time, frame by frame, and rebuilds it; Tagny's video *We Weight on the Land (Winter)* takes footage and assembles it to create a meditative pace; Ye's sound piece *xi xi 息 息* and interactive poem *Fin* (part of their G=A=R=D=E=N series) construct environmental qualities where one gets lost in time; O'Byrne's live stream floral installation *Flowers in Time and Space* (2021) shows linearly time as it unfolds.

The timeliness of this project corresponds with the current global fixation on new materials and short-lived/disposable products, which has led to the mass-consumption of goods

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<sup>10</sup> The qualities/gestures/reactions that demonstrate liveliness emerge from the disturbance of an environment—and those who dwell in said environment. The human manipulation of organic forms and intentional (sometimes forceful) arrangement of the environment disturbs their place in the ecosystem. "Disturbance is a change in environmental conditions that causes a pronounced change in an ecosystem" (Tsing 2017, 160).

<sup>11</sup> Hito Steyerl, "Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?" e-flux, September 15, 2020, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/49/60004/too-much-world-is-the-internet-dead/>.

<sup>12</sup> Humans perceives time as linear because it reinforces the western notion progress and industrialization as they relate to the present; perpetuating the misconception that humans are always at the peak of their ability. Working at an office doesn't feel like linear progression through time, when you're repeating the same activity everyday this experience feels cyclical. Our bodies decay and that can be perceived as linear because of the neo-liberal ideological emphasis on the individual. However, when you consider human life outside of the individual the cycles of human civilization are more apparent; consider the phrase 'history repeats itself'. Although visually rigid and often limiting, grids create patterns which dictate our expectations when using digital platforms — these expectations are a kind of cycles (similar: infinite scroll). A cycle can be an exploration in repetition.

that are dependent on inhumane labour and systems of production<sup>13</sup> that have caused and continue to cause ecological disasters<sup>14</sup>—the systemic flaws in material supply chains have been made more obvious by the pandemic.

Before the pandemic it was apparent that museums and galleries were struggling to digitally exhibit their collections to the public; it was also apparent that meaningful digital experiences with collections were not a priority. Attempts by art institutions to create digital experiences outside of social media like *Send Me* by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art<sup>15</sup> and the Laura Owens emoji-keyboard by the Whitney Museum of American Art<sup>16</sup> are examples of how portions of contemporary art collections can exist digitally to engage with audiences. As enjoyable as these examples are, they function as a gimmick to attract attention to the institution and lack the substance of form seen in the physical collections of their respective institutions.<sup>17</sup> Simply posting to social media or posting a jpeg of a painting is not enough to stimulate audiences—super-par digital content is devoid of an affective presence.<sup>18</sup> Incorporating digital space into the curatorial and educational agendas of museums and galleries, those institutions would be able to engage with a larger and more diverse audience. Special consideration must go into curating digital spaces—or else they become cumbersome and unappealing. Being cognizant of the amount of information and visual stimulation on the internet, this project works to get the audience to deeply engage with the content and to spend more time with their online interactions. The significance of this thesis is to move with the future of exhibition, not to merely document a physical show and post the photos online.

The question *why curate a digital space to exhibit art that depicts botanical matter* was necessary to align the content of the displayed artworks with the presentation of the exhibition. Our emotional connections to physical places and the objects that occupy space get depicted and translated to digital space.<sup>19</sup> By prioritizing artworks that feature decaying materials and relating these materials to the digital realm, *Fragmented Flora* considers the tangible qualities that make

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<sup>13</sup> Brian Merchant, "Life and Death in Apple's Forbidden City," *The Guardian*, June 18, 2017, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jun/18/foxconn-life-death-forbidden-city-longhua-suicide-apple-iphone-brian-merchant-one-device-extract>.

<sup>14</sup> T.J. Demos, "The Agency of Fire: Burning Aesthetics," *E-flux*, February 2019, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/98/256882/the-agency-of-fire-burning-aesthetics/>.

<sup>15</sup> Jay Mollica, "Send Me SFMOMA," SFMOMA, June 2017, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://www.sfmoma.org/read/send-me-sfmoma/>.

<sup>16</sup> Claire Voon, "Whitney Museum Launches Emoji Designed by Laura Owens," *Hyperallergic*, January 18, 2018, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://hyperallergic.com/421955/whitney-museum-laura-owens-emoji/>.

<sup>17</sup> Rob Horning, "The Price of Shares," *Even Magazine*, July 03, 2018, accessed February 06, 2021, <http://evenmagazine.com/the-price-of-shares/>.

<sup>18</sup> Novuyo Moyo, "Social Work: The Art World Online," *Art Agenda*, January 28, 2021, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://www.art-agenda.com/features/374534/social-work-the-art-world-online>.

<sup>19</sup> Software and hardware have to be assembled to create digital technology. Botanical matter is cut from its natural form and assembled to make a floral arrangement or bouquet. Theory that informed this inquiry is from Jane Bennett: "it is because of the creative activity within actants that the agency of assemblages is not best described in terms of social structures, a location that designates a stolid whole whose efficacy resides only in its conditioning recalcitrance or capacity to obstruct" (Bennett, 35); and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing: "the question of how the varied species in a species assemblage influence each other—if at all—is never settled: some thwart (eat) each other; other work together to make life possible; still others just happen to find themselves in the same place" (Tsing 2017, 22).

physical experiences affective. Installations and artworks that use ephemeral<sup>20</sup> materials (such as flowers) have the potential to dynamically engage with space as organic matter is beholden to material realities. Showing the passage of time is essential to understanding how bodies and objects coexist in space.<sup>21</sup> The online exhibition of the floral installation exists digitally in multiple physical spaces through the individual devices the viewer watches the live stream feed from. Viewing the live stream of the floral installation allows the viewer to revisit the experience at their leisure, multiple viewings depict the degradation of the organic matter. With the live stream visual changes in the installation can be obvious. Every time you experience any of the artworks an aspect shifts some way or another—whether that is physical or emotional change. The resiliency of life is shown in the transformation of materials as the physical constraints of reality pushes the present into the future.<sup>22</sup>

The presentation of is not singular as online materials are easily replicated in content and form digitally as social media platforms have been designed so users can share content and manipulate the form of said content. Repetition can act as a replica: the same object in different forms, or the appearance of sameness. Through the manipulation of nature greenhouses / gardens / farms demonstrate physical replication of form — this kind of human intervention of organic form can be simulated in various ways digitally: “meaning is always readily available to be repeated, remixed, and/or cannibalized in service of creating the sensation of the new” (Segal and Kalliala, 2020). The exhibit title *Fragmented Flora* is a direct reference intended to reveal the relationship between the fragmentation of floral bodies and the fragmentation of imagery and messaging online. Botanical forms get fragmented of when one cuts and reassembles said organic matter.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ephemeral objects are designed to provide information before they get decarded. Fleeting matter demonstrates the material connection to how an object changes over time. Giovanni Aloï describes the ephemeral qualities of the flower industry, “millions of plants are mass-produced in greenhouses around the world for the sole purpose of marking a festivity—their ephemeral existence is preencoded by capitalism within the modalities of production and consumption we inhabit them with. These plants are not grown to last, they are hyper-fertilized, and genetically modified to produce extremely large and colourful flowers or fruit” (Aloï 2019, 135).

<sup>21</sup> Tsing describes the co-existence of bodies and objects as contamination, it does not simply relate to material purity. “We are contaminated by our encounters; they change who we are as we make way for others. As contamination changes world-making projects, mutual worlds—and new directions—may emerge. Everyone carries a history of contamination; purity is not an option. One value of keeping precarity in mind is that it makes us remember that changing with circumstances is the stuff of survival” (Tsing 2017, 27). One is contaminated by an encounter when the subject or object is irrevocably changed—when there is no way back to previous ways of being.

<sup>22</sup> Vitality describes the affective and material qualities that are inherent in all living things. Jane Bennett theorizes this as vital materiality which “describes the difference between animated things and passive objects — “the lively powers of material formations” (Bennett 2010, vii).

<sup>23</sup> Giovanni Aloï describes the ways flowers get fragmented through human intervention: “In the case of plants death becomes a complex problem on both fronts: the ethical and the biological. Well it is fair to say that an animal can be biologically declared dead, matters are more nuanced with plants. Is the cut flower dead or still living? When is a plant truly dead considering that an individual can be splintered apart in multiple cuttings that can thrive as new independent beings? Or that even the fragment of roots, leaves, or tendrils can in some species generate a new plant? Plant life can be fragmented (cuttings and propagation), reconfigured (grafting), networked (rhizomes and bacterial sympoiesis), and can be suspended for extended periods of time. These are all notions that biologically invade the classical construction of individuality, identity, life, and death in ways that apply to mammals and other animals” (Aloï 2019, 233).

The artworks exhibited in *Fragmented Flora* engage with the ways in which humans manipulate with their surroundings and intervene with the cycles of the earth.<sup>24</sup> The vibrancy of all things is portrayed in *Still life with fallen fruit* by reconceptualizing traditional still lifes through stop-motion animation. *We Weight on the Land (Winter)* demonstrates the tension between bringing gardens into domestic spaces and the untameable essence of nature. *Fin* engages with the concept of habitat, issues with urban planning, and the integration of digital technology in domestic spaces, by using stock photos paired with the interactivity of the CAPTCHA poem. *Flowers in Time and Space* is a collaboration with the florist Hayley O’Byrne (Carmel Floral) to interpret the curatorial thematic and to visualize the theory that accompanies the show. The subject matter of all the artworks shown engages with the human desire to act upon nature—with or against.<sup>25</sup>

## METHODOLOGY

The internet is a maximalist place; platforms are designed to overwhelm the user with information and gamify the experience of using platforms, so users continuously return. This style of interaction creates a blur of experiences rather than creating an atmosphere where the user feels compelled to pause and consider what they are looking at. As operators of digital devices humans intentionally direct gestures onto materials. These gestures compound to enable systems that gives said operator the power to control their environment.<sup>26</sup> The website was

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<sup>24</sup> The impact humans have on the planet is elaborated on in *The Museum is Not Enough* by discussing the creation of space: “spaces are not simply there. They need to be produced by human action and perception” (Borasi, Garutti, and Ferre 2019, 57). In *As Radical, as Mother, as Salad, as Shelter: What Should Art Institutions Do Now?* human intervention is described as the power of art: “the power of art lies in its capacity to dismantle systems of perception. It does this to us on a singular level, bedeviling our knowledge and showing us how our senses disobey our rational minds” (Dushko and White 2018, 11). Additionally, in *As Radical, as Mother, as Salad, as Shelter: What Should Art Institutions Do Now?* art is discussed in relationship to cultural shifts: “it’s about the cultural shift of the role of art in every instance of life, not simply precluded or limited by the art institution, not in a lab where we preserve the experience. Art has to exist everywhere” (Dushko and White 2018, 57).

<sup>25</sup> Desire ties to the capitalist notion that material wealth directly connects to happiness. Objects and the bodies that encounter them are not neutral. Getting what you want is terrifying because one has to confront with their desires and the reality of how one feels if their desires do not meet their expectations. The human connection to material objects is described by Sara Ahmed as desire: “desire is both what promises us something, what gives us energy, and also what is lacking, even in the very moment of its apparent realization” (Ahmed 2010, 31); Lauren Berlant describes it as optimism: “Any object of optimism promises to guarantee the endurance of something, the survival of something, the flourishing of something, and above all the protection of the desire that made this object or scene powerful enough to have magnetized an attachment to it” (Berlant 2012, 48); Jean Baudrillard describes the role optimistic and/or desirable objects have in categorizing social status: “Objects work as categories of objects which, in the most tyrannical fashion, define categories of people - they police social meaning, and the significations they engender are rigidly controlled” (Baudrillard 2000, 192).

<sup>26</sup> Humans’ direct gestures onto the physical world; organic matter strives to survive as long as possible, therefore organic matter reacts to the human gesture of manipulating (or completely changing) the environmental factors and the physical form of organic matter. Jane Bennett describes this as “an operator is that which, by virtue of its particular location in an assemblage and the fortuitous of being in the right place at the right time, makes the difference, makes things happen, becomes the decisive force catalyzing an event” (Bennett 2010, 9); Bennett relates this to the vibrancy of all matter by “emphasizing the ensemble nature of action and the interconnections between persons and things, a theory of vibrant matter presents individuals as simply incapable of bearing full responsibility for their effects” (Bennett 2010, 37). Susan Schuppli similarly describes material witnesses which “are non-human entities and machinists ecologies that archive their complex interactions with the world, producing ontological

conceptualized to consider how interactive elements would be a part of the online exhibition. The installation resulted in a constellation of artworks, allowing the viewer to glance at the project as a whole. The interactions create points of intrigue so the viewer can explore the project in depth, rewarding the viewer for engaging with the project slowly and with consideration to details. The goal of this approach was to take advantage of the positive aspects of displaying work online (larger more diverse audience) and counteract the negative (short attention spans, overwhelmed by content). As this project focuses on the online presentation of organic forms, analyzing digital tools became integral not only to research content but to conceptualize effective applications of virtual interactions. Utilizing online platforms such as, Instagram, Pinterest, and are.na were essential to collect visual and theoretical sources to draw connections between aesthetics and written knowledge. As a graphic designer I have worked on the development of numerous websites. The choice of the online exhibition platform, Cargo Collective, was based on my previous experiences creating online content. For this thesis, the role of the curator was not a singular role; it involved graphic design, website development, promotional logistics, and artist collaboration. Embodying artist as curator gave me the opportunity to explore potential virtual interactions and evaluate what visuals were necessary to convey the themes outlined in the curatorial premise.

To achieve affective engagement, subtle interactions were programmed into the website. The first interaction the viewer comes across is the floating orchids. There's a time delay and it takes a couple minutes before the page is populated with the orchids. They create an atmospheric quality that establishes how dimensionality can be created in digital space, not only through their movement but through their transparency as the orchids are able to float through and intersect with the other elements on the website. The first artwork the viewer comes across is Xuan Ye's sound piece *xi xi* 息息. When paired with the floating orchids *xi xi* 息息 constructs the environmental qualities of being lost in time. The audio texture of *xi xi* 息息 makes all the exhibited artworks feel like they belong online, especially as the sound piece can be played simultaneously with the other works. It was important to pair *xi xi* 息息 with the floating orchids because this combination draws the viewer into the other aspects of the website. The gifs on the homepage were programmed so they can be moved anywhere on the page and they are able to be overlapped. This interaction allows the viewer to visualize the connections between the exhibited artworks—mainly our perceptions of how matter exists in space. Rather than embedding the whole videos, the gestural elements programmed with the gifs on the home page alludes to how the exhibited artworks engage with temporality in distinct ways.

All the participating artists previously exhibited work that directly relates to the concept of *Fragmented Flora*: incorporating organic matter into artworks to visualize decay and demonstrate the change of materials over time. Belliveau's solo show at Gallery 44<sup>27</sup> "Alone in

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transformations and informatics dispositions that can be forensically decoded and reassembled back into history" (Schuppli 2020, 3).

<sup>27</sup> "Alone in the House (Still Life with Clarice Lispector)," Gallery 44, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://www.gallery44.org/exhibitions/alone-in-the-house-still-life-with-clarice-lispector>.

the House (Still Life with Clarice Lispector)” was comprised of animations, mobiles, and lenticular prints. The concept of the exhibit uses Clarice Lispector’s poetic interpretation of time to reinterpret traditional still lives through animation. This conceptual combination resists the constraints of linear time and western notions of permanence. The affective presence in Belliveau’s piece *Still live with fallen fruit* is seen in the transformation of materials as they live and die—amplified through stop-motion as the expansion and contraction of organic and inorganic matter becomes visually dramatic. This work shows the “hauntings of things”—the visual qualities that resonate with us and how we prescribe meaning to them. Tagny accompanied floral installations with the artworks *Alocasia Stand* (2019), *We Weight on the Land - Part 2 - Spring And Legacy* (2019), and *Nurture, Nurture, Nurture* (2019) in the group exhibit “A Complete Change Of Form Into A More Beautiful Or Spiritual State” at Cooper Cole.<sup>28</sup> The combination of organic matter with digital video visualizes how Tagny’s artistic practice aligns with the curatorial concept. Tagny’s online shows “to feel close”<sup>29</sup> and “What Is a Weed?”<sup>30</sup> demonstrate how her work can be successfully translated online. *We Weight of the Land (Winter)* considers gestures of ritual enacted to materialize and process loss, grief, and engage in processes of renewal in conjunction with the rhythms and materials of the natural world. The visual alignment of metaphor with the chosen materials in the performance demonstrates an affective presence by communicating to the audience to view their existence in a more sustainable way; the organic matter featured will decay gracefully into the earth whereas the plastic will take centuries to decompose. The arrangement and articulation of materials to find alternative uses for the original intention of the materials attracted me to Ye’s work. As seen in Ye’s found object sculpture depicting a flower constructed from old CD’s that projects sound by capturing and transmitting nearby radio waves; and in the piece, *A Sister is a Forever Friend, materials: found wisdom* (2020); comprised of a shower head and Moss, and the other part was made of a glass tube found metal and a leafy green, show at Hearth Gallery.<sup>31</sup> The interactivity of *Fin* is seen in the pulsation of the stock images as they wait for the user to interpret the CAPTCHA and type the interpretation into the textbox. This form of active participation demonstrates how affect can be created through digital interactions. Hayley O’Byrne’s *Flowers in Time and Space* demonstrates how space is occupied over time. The short duration of living and cut flowers effectively work as visuals of such because one can easily watch the decay of flowers. The vantage point of this floral installation becomes fragmented through the screen as the viewer can only see the installation from the point of view of the low-quality camera. The ephemerality of digital space showed itself when the first livestream was disrupted after being live for 61 hours, 20 minutes, and 39 seconds. The second livestream lasted for 215 hours, 14 minutes, and 22 seconds before I turned it off. This content cannot be retrieved, downloaded, or

<sup>28</sup> “A Complete Change Of Form Into A More Beautiful Or Spiritual State,” COOPER COLE, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://coopercolegallery.com/exhibition/2019-a-complete-change-of-form-into-a-more-beautiful-or-spiritual-state/>.

<sup>29</sup> Eve Tagny and Emii Alrai, tofeelclose, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://www.tofeelclose.com/eve-tagny-emii-alrai>.

<sup>30</sup> “What Is a Weed?” Home | What Is a Weed?, accessed February 06, 2021, <http://ellengallery.concordia.ca/what-is-a-weed/>.

<sup>31</sup> “Stem to Where We Grew Stuck,” HEARTH, accessed February 06, 2021, <http://hearthgarage.com/pages/STEM.html>.

salvaged. The delicate and transient qualities in flowers visualize the material qualities of decay; the pixilation in the livestream from the low-quality camera visualizes the digital qualities of decay. The presence of affect radiates from the material and digital qualities of decay.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review looks at texts that discuss alternative interpretations of our material reality, as it pertains to time and space. This project synthesizes poetic theories of space, material culture and the capitalist connection to objects, affect theory, hauntology, and alternative methods of perceiving time and matter to engage with how the tangible and intangible qualities of space and time manifest in contemporary western culture. The categories of the bibliography were developed to organize all of the fields of study. This was done for clarity and to be able to easily reference the material. Although the research converges these fields, the categorization strategy of the bibliography acknowledges the individual fields the resources came from. The theoretical perspective informing this project involved categorizing the bibliography into five sections: floral, digital, material and spatial, affect and perception, and curatorial references.

The curatorial references that have been essential to inform this project have been rooted in care and community, while being critical of institutional structures that enable systemic bias. Additionally, these texts consider why artists trust curators, why curators display art; and in what ways do curators believe the presentation of art is in service of their communities. The texts informing this thinking include *As Radical, As Mother, As Salad, As Shelter: What Should Art Institutions Do Now?* edited by Paper Monument, *Whitewalling: Art, Race & Protest in 3 Acts* by Aruna D'Souza, and *Saturation: Race, Art, and the Circulation of Value* edited by C. Riley Snorton and Hentyle Yapp.

Researching the material properties of organic matter and the circumstances (whether desire or economic) that encourage and bring people to cultivate and grow flowers was crucial to this project. The most potent resource that discussed the capitalist and global structures of the cut-flower industry was *Favored Flowers* by Catherine Ziegler. *The Mushroom at the End of the World* by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing provided insight into the ecological resiliency of plants and humans, and the interdependence of species for survival as it relates to capital. *Why Look at Plants* edited by Giovanni Aloï connected the previous two sources to my research into material culture and artistic endeavors. This research purposely avoids researching the specific attachments and meanings associated with individual flowers. Instead, the research focuses on the aesthetics and spatial arrangements of space by visually analyzing the elements of style in vintage ikebana books. Additionally, discovering and following contemporary florists on



Instagram<sup>32</sup> was essential to see current trends and applications of style.<sup>33</sup> “The Plant Issue (99)” of *Esse* and “Issue 12 (Summer 2018)” of *The Plant Magazine* were integral to keep the research current and further link visual trends to the theory. The book *The Japanese Garden* edited by Sophie Walker contains several essays that poetically connects the ways humans intervene with nature to the way’s humans create, exist in, and move through space.

This research questions why we perceive space and time as rigid structures—laws of being instead of learning through lived experience. The onset of this inquiry began by looking at theory that poetically illustrates how individuals inhabit and move through space. Central texts in this line of thought are *The Poetics of Space* by Gaston Bachelard, *Human Space* by Otto Friedrich Bollnow, and *In Praise of Shadows* by Jun’ichirō Tanizaki. One needs to look at the past to observe how contemporary attachments to places and objects manifested. *Thinking with Things* by Esther Pasztor, “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method” by Jules Prown, *The Condition of Postmodernity* by David Harvey, and *The System of Objects* by Jean Baudrillard provided context of the history of material culture as it relates to the economic and societal conditions of modernism and postmodernism. These texts helped link the ramifications of capitalism to the more poetic theories on how humans occupy and manifest space. This research avoided putting too much emphasis on the distinctions between ‘place’ and ‘space’ as the relationship between matter and time is central to the project. Notable texts on the human relationship to space that have been omitted from the bibliography are *The Production of Space* by Henri Lefebvre, *Being in Time* by Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenology of Perception* by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Language of Space* by Bryan Lawson, and *Ways of Seeing* by John Berger. Although the aforementioned texts conceptually grapple with the thematic, they focus more on space and place whereas, the texts in the bibliography focus on space and matter.

Studying affect theory was essential to elaborate on the previously mentioned research to describe the emotional impulses that attract people to things. The essential texts to engaging with affective theory were: *Vibrant Matter* by Jane Bennett, *The Promise of Happiness* by Sara Ahmed, *Cruel Optimism* by Lauren Berlant, “The Autonomy of Affect” by Brian Massumi, and *Ordinary Affects* by Kathleen Stewart. Additionally, the articles “The Umami Theory of Value” by Martti Kalliala and Emily Segal<sup>34</sup> and “Something in the Air” by Thomas McMullan<sup>35</sup> draw upon affect theory by linking an individual’s relationship to taste and smell (significantly, not vision) to contemporary cultural production. As this research progressed, the importance of hauntology became evident to situate how times feels versus linear measurements of time. The term hauntology derives from *Specters of Marx* by Jacques Derrida, but it has been clarified to

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<sup>32</sup> Stella Bugbee, “Freakabana: The New, Ugly-Cool Style of Arranging Flowers,” *The Cut*, November 20, 2017, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://www.thecut.com/2017/11/freakabana-the-new-ugly-cool-style-of-arranging-flowers.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Leah Collins, “Say It with Flowers - the Weirder the Better | CBC Arts,” *CBC News*, January 16, 2020, accessed July 21, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/arts/say-it-with-flowers-the-weirder-the-better-1.5428100>.

<sup>34</sup> Martti Kalliala and Emily Segal, “The Umami Theory of Value: Autopsy of the Experience Economy,” *Nemesis*, March 2020, accessed February 20, 2021, <https://nemesis.global/memos/umami>.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas McMullan, “Something in the Air,” *Frieze*, August 7, 2017, accessed February 20, 2021, <https://www.frieze.com/article/something-air-0>.

describe the term as a nostalgia for the future in the article “What Is Hauntology?” by Mark Fisher. This project uses affect theory and hauntology as theoretical guides to discuss how time feels when one is aware of how matter decays overtime—specifically how lived experience informs one’s perception of time and space. *Meeting the Universe Halfway* by Karen Barad demonstrates the problem with contemporary ways of speaking about matter. Barad argues that English uses Newtonian physics to describe how matter exists in time and space; however contemporary physics follows the Bohr model—which accounts for the transference of energy between all matter.

The research into the social and material implications of digital technology uncovered the fragility and imperfections in digital infrastructures, which mirrors the ephemeral qualities of botanical matter. The conceptual alignment between these two subjects which superficially juxtapose each other is unique to this research. Hito Steyerl essays in *The Wretched of the Screen* are about the cultural implications of the virtual realm (mainly in the context of artistic production). As digital space allows for unparalleled connection with people across geological boundaries and access to seemingly infinite resources these systems are not without their faults. Conversations about artistic production in digital spaces generally leave out the material reality of the hardware required to sustain said digital spaces. James Bridle’s book *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future* and podcast *New Ways of Seeing* were pivotal resources to connect all of the disparate news articles outlining the material and social complications of digital technologies to the lived reality of the reader. The significance of this connection is to remind the reader that they have agency.

## EXHIBITION REVIEW

The exhibits reviewed for this project translate the affective qualities from one form to another to consider tangible applications of the theory. Looking at exhibitions that feature organic matter was essential to consider what it means to show work that degrades in spaces that are dedicated to the conservation and preservation of art and to examine how the transformation of materials transforms space. The exhibition of botanical matter in modern and contemporary art museums is not new, notably *Edward Steichen’s Delphiniums* (1936) at the MoMA<sup>36</sup> and the *Tropicália* series by Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica<sup>37</sup>. There are logistical issues with displaying life matter in a museum, the spaces are highly regulated to preserve the permanent museum collection. Displaying ephemeral artworks lend themselves to affective experiences because the artworks are not meant to last forever, and the materials change over time. Forcing lively installations to be stagnant makes the artwork melancholic. Pierre Huyghe’s sculpture, *A Way in*

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<sup>36</sup> Project Assistant Archivist Posted by Celia Hartmann, "MoMA: Edward Steichen Archive: Delphiniums Blue (and White and Pink, Too)," MoMA, March 8, 2011, accessed February 06, 2021, [https://www.moma.org/explore/inside\\_out/2011/03/08/edward-steichen-archive-delphiniums-blue-and-white-and-pink-too/](https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2011/03/08/edward-steichen-archive-delphiniums-blue-and-white-and-pink-too/).

<sup>37</sup> Tate, "The Story of Hélio Oiticica and the Tropicália Movement – Look Closer," Tate, accessed July 19, 2020, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/helio-oiticica-7730/story-helio-oiticica-and-tropicalia-movement>.

*Untilled* (2012)<sup>38</sup> has a potent buzzing presence in the video documentation, but the sculpture had to lose the bees (the hive was preserved) to be kept in the AGO permanent collection. In this instance the affect was drained from the work, leaving it to recede into nothingness in the basement.<sup>39</sup> Following the practices of artists like Pierre Huyghe, Anika Yi<sup>40</sup>, Sharona Franklin<sup>41</sup>, Michelle Bui<sup>42</sup>, Ananda Gabo<sup>43</sup>, and Nathalee Paolinelli<sup>44</sup> informed what tangible qualities are present when exhibiting artworks that feature decaying matter.

Observing digital representation of form to problematize the ways in which digital representation of form distorts time and space to challenge the written laws of our perception of time and space. These observations are essential to look at how online curation can be used to assemble and archive information. The aesthetics and methodological approach that sustains *Net Art Anthology* has been a critical resource in forming this project; this approach demonstrates the importance of digital artistic production. A similar curatorial project is *Art in the Age of the Internet* chronicles art that is produced for virtual space and exhibited online since 1989. The book *New Media Art* edited by Mark Tribe elaborates on the history of digital art. These resources provide historical context for contemporary exhibitions of new media art and clarify the terminology surrounding digital art. *Rethinking Curating* by Beryl Graham and Sarah Cook explores effective strategies for their curation an exhibition of digital artworks. Two new media exhibits that informed how to approach the integration of digital artworks with physical installations are *Filling the Klein Bottle* (2020)<sup>45</sup> and *The Upper Side of the Sky* (2020)<sup>46</sup>. For this project the curatorial research of digital exhibitions has ranged from *Well Now WTF* (2020)<sup>47</sup>, a show which leans into the aesthetics and cultural norms of the internet—to Mirror Mirror Gallery<sup>48</sup>—which has a minimal interface and displays traditional artistic mediums such as paintings and ceramics.

The curatorial logic has built upon the sensorial aspects of the reviewed exhibitions to translate these tangible qualities into a virtual space that relies on the affective presence of digital interactions. Curating an online exhibition follows the trajectory of my artistic development

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<sup>38</sup> "Seeing A Way in Untilled," Art Gallery of Ontario, November 18, 2020, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://ago.ca/agoinsider/seeing-way-untilled>.

<sup>39</sup> Robin Pogrebin, "Clean House to Survive? Museums Confront Their Crowded Basements," *The New York Times*, March 12,

<sup>40</sup> "The Hugo Boss Prize 2016: Anicka Yi, Life Is Cheap," The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://www.guggenheim.org/exhibition/the-hugo-boss-prize-2016>.

<sup>41</sup> Brooke Bobb, "Artist Sharona Franklin Displays a Decomposing Jelly Cake-and Explores Fresh Forms-in Her New Solo Show," *Vogue*, March 4, 2020, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://www.vogue.com/article/sharona-franklin-artist-solo-exhibition>.

<sup>42</sup> "Spilled Plenitude," Franz Kaka, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://franzkaka.com/Spilled-Plenitude>.

<sup>43</sup> "Life as We Know It Ananda Gabo & Anastasiya Yatsuk, Keeley Haftner, Robert Hengeveld, Shawn Johnston, Emily Shanahan, and Sultana Zana," InterAccess, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://interaccess.org/exhibition/life-we-know-it>.

<sup>44</sup> "Made Still," Equinox Gallery, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://www.equinoxgallery.com/exhibitions/made-still/>.

<sup>45</sup> Belinda Kwan, Xuan Ye, and Wenxin Zhang, "∞," *Filling the Klein Bottle*, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://www.fillingthekleinbottle.com/>.

<sup>46</sup> "The Upper Side of the Sky Jawa El Khash," InterAccess, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://interaccess.org/exhibition/upper-side-sky>.

<sup>47</sup> "Well Now WTF?" WELL NOW WTF, April 4, 2020, accessed February 06, 2021, <http://wellnow.wtf/>.

<sup>48</sup> "Mirror Mirror Gallery," Mirror Mirror Gallery, accessed February 06, 2021, <https://www.mirrormirror.gallery/>.

more so than a conventional curatorial project. The shift to an online exhibition was mainly a practical decision given the closures and unpredictability surround the pandemic, narrowing the theoretical basis and curatorial premise. If I would have followed through with a conventional curatorial project the theoretical backing would have been solely based on academic research and outsider information. My experience as an artist greatly informed the development of the website and artist communication. I understand what it entails to create visuals for a theoretical concept and what it feels like to make an artwork public—I did not ask anything of the artists that I would feel uncomfortable doing.

## CONCLUSION

*Fragmented Flora: Digital Embodiments of Being in Time and Space* consists of the curation of a digital environment that utilizes the affective qualities of physical space; the written research looks at our relationship to the digital sphere and the tangible qualities that are traditionally valued in western art practices. The priorities of western art museums are transparent as the most curatorial attention goes to traditional oil paintings, significantly their placement in high traffic areas, placing seating in those spaces, and painting the walls colours other than white—these gestures show dedication and commitment to the exhibited work. Traditional depictions of flowers in oil paintings shows them in one part of the plants lifespan (in full bloom) to serve as a memory of what it means to be alive versus experiencing life. Artistic practices that embrace the signs of age, decay, and change in materials such as the artworks exhibited in this exhibition, have the potential to engage in the emotional aspects of space. The fragile nature of digital space resists the institutionalized western art tradition of conservation and preservation and conceptually aligns with the material qualities of organic matter. Decay describes the physical degradation of organic matter and the digital pixilation and corruption of virtual matter. There is a common misperception that digital spaces are impervious to deterioration; the quality of an image in meaning and form degrades as images circulate, digital documents can become corrupt, lost or permanently erased, software and digital platforms cannot be fully secure and are susceptible to hacking, the rapid change of technology and planned obsolescence means that hardware becomes moribund, digital information is hosted on massive physical servers that are geographically located in countries with cool temperatures that due to climate change are in danger of overheating and failing (Steyerl 2012, 31). This project considers the material ramifications of digital technology by researching the horrific labour conditions and ecological devastation that are a result of mining for rare earth materials and assembling hardware; while acknowledging that plant life is not exempt from the complications that derive from being a commodity in a capitalist system. The mirroring of the fragility of flowers with the instability of digital technologies is unique to this research. *Fragmented Flora* considers what sensory aspects trigger an emotional response to problematize how one perceives visual information, our attachment to things, and what it means to watch something die.

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## ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES <sup>49</sup>

### ELISABETH BELLIVEAU

Elisabeth Belliveau is an artist, educator, and published author based in Amiskwaciy-Wâskahikan (Edmonton, AB). Her animated work *Still life with fallen fruit* is featured in this exhibit. Her animation depicts the life inherent in all things by setting up a still life and letting the materials breathe. The transformation of materials as they live and die is amplified through stop-motion as the expansion and contraction of organic and inorganic matter become visually dramatic. Belliveau's sculptures and animations use "time as a material" to observe how materials perform, proving that energy transfers between all things. By "composing with living materials" she documents the agency that things have because we can see how objects move without us. Belliveau's animation demonstrates how "things are performing and acting in time" by producing roaming compositions that visually dialogue with traditional still life paintings. Additionally, this work shows "hauntings of things"—the visual qualities that resonate with us and how we prescribe meaning to them.

### EVE TAGNY

Eve Tagny is an artist based in Tiohtià:ke (Montréal, QC). Her video piece *We Weight on the Land (Winter)* is featured in this exhibit. This work gracefully observes the ways humans ritualize grief by creating small monuments that move with and against nature; to problematize how we sustain life, what structures allow for growth, and how we are entangled in the systems that surround us. The difficulty of winter is integral to *We Weight on the Land (Winter)*, as this season serves as an allegory for grief and because it is the restful season—when flora and flora pause significant growth to prepare and recover for life to burst in spring. The performance happens in front of a window to show the tension between the human desire to domesticize and manipulate our environments and how that desire affects natural cycles (such as eating out of season fruit in the winter). Plastic bags can protect plants from the elements (frost); plastic bags are also used to cover bodies after someone has passed on. The physical connection of all beings depicted is communicated through air flow and the transference of energy from people to plants. The soil the lemon plant lives in is vital matter—soil is the essence that feeds the land (therefore feeds those who inhabit the land) and what we return to when we die. Overall, the work considers gestures of ritual enacted to materialize and process loss, grief, and engage in processes of renewal in conjunction with the rhythms and materials of the natural world. The objective of this to view our existence in a more sustainable way; the organic matter featured will decay gracefully into the earth whereas the plastic will take centuries to decompose.

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<sup>49</sup> All of the biographies have been edited, contributed to, and approved by the individual artists.

## HAYLEY O'BYRNE

Carmel Floral was founded in 2017 by Hayley O'Byrne. Based in Tkaronto (Toronto, ON), Carmel Floral offers botanical styling for editorial projects, florals for weddings & events, and tailored individual deliveries. Carmel Floral is committed to sustainable practices.

The materiality of flowers and their vessels demonstrate how space is occupied—thus setting up the material presence of the place, dictating the emotional atmosphere. The delicate and transient qualities in flowers demonstrate the material visualization of decay. The short duration of living and cut flowers effectively work as visuals of such because one can easily watch the decay of flowers. Cut flowers need a vessel to survive in, the vessel needs a place to be situated in. Vessels hold flowers in the container that the flowers will live and eventually die in, demonstrating the material constraints of interpretation. The vantage point of this floral installation becomes fragmented through the screen as the viewer can only see the installation from the point of view of the camera.

## XUAN YE

Xuan Ye is an artist, musician and software engineer based in Tkaronto (Toronto, ON). Their sound piece *xi xi* 息息 and interactive poem *Fin* (part of their  $G=A=R=D=E=N$  series) are featured in this exhibit. Together these works interpret and recontextualize materials to demonstrate an alternative perspective of our current reality. The sound piece *xi xi* 息息 creates space for us to listen to our bodies, by doing so one can learn to use their intuition to open the possibilities of perception. *Fin* problematizes how we translate our surroundings and experiences into knowledge and what that means for the physical synthesis of digital interpretations of self.

On the first three tracks of *xi xi* 息息, Ye uses an electronic module for real-time biofeedback called MIDI Sprout, which, when touched, translates electrolytes present in the body into MIDI. Others have used the module primarily as a way of sonifying plants. 'Plants never say that they want to be heard,' Ye says—and, after a pause., 'but I use my own body.'

*Fin* is a work from Ye's  $G=A=R=D=E=N$  series that speculates on the idea of "habitat" in the context of technological acceleration and urban sprawl. This interactive piece starts from an anagrammatic poem transformed out of "home for sale". The prose in form of CAPTCHA are translated into stock images, which is a textual-visual archive signifying a simulacrum of an oversimplified world, a textual-visual environment that feeds us and that at the same time we inter-operate within.

## ALEX GREGORY

Alex Gregory is an artist-researcher whose work combines the materiality of analog techniques with digital manipulation. Born and raised in Amiskwaciy-Wâskahikan (Edmonton, AB), she is currently pursuing an MFA in Criticism and Curatorial Practices at OCAD University, in Tkaronto (Toronto, ON). In 2017, she graduated from The Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA) in Portland, OR, with a BFA in Communication Design. Alex Gregory has experience working as Digital Designer for a variety of corporate companies. Additionally, her design work has been featured in *She Shreds Magazine*, *Bitch Media* and *SAD Mag*.