

About the Artist

Colin Rosati is a Toronto-based interdisciplinary installation artist that uses video, software, and electronics. His practice balances the often polarized worlds of technological immersion and engagement with agency, vitality, and care. Rosati graduated from OCAD University's Integrated Media program in 2018, with a focus on media that interrogates emergent behaviours in the North American "attention economy." Colin has exhibited both nationally and internationally, and was the first winner of EQ Bank's Emerging Digital Artist Award in 2015.

About the InterAccess Media Arts Prize

The InterAccess Media Arts Prize is awarded annually to a graduating student of the Integrated Media program at OCAD University whose work complements InterAccess's mission to expand the cultural space of technology. Students must show proficiency in creating mechanical, kinetic, electronic, interactive audio, video, or new media work. In addition to a \$500 cash award, the recipient receives a one-year studio membership, one year of complimentary workshops, a solo exhibition at InterAccess, and access to professional development and mentorship opportunities. The first prize was awarded in 1990.

About the Author

Tatum Dooley is a writer based in Toronto. Her work has appeared in Aperture, Border Crossings, Canadian Art, the Globe & Mail, Lapham's Quarterly, Real Life Magazine, SSENSE, The Walrus and more. She is a contributing editor at The Site Magazine.

POLLINATING PROXIES: COLIN ROSATI & THE AESTHETICS OF DISAPPEARANCE

An essay by Tatum Dooley

Inter/Access

950 Dupont St., Unit 1
Toronto, Ontario M6H 1Z2
+1 416 532 0597

interaccess.org

Gallery Hours
Tues - Sat 11-6
Open until 8 every Wednesday
Admission is always free

Founded in 1983, InterAccess is a non-profit gallery, educational facility, production studio, and festival dedicated to emerging practices in art and technology. Our programs support art forms that integrate technology, fostering and supporting the full cycle of art and artistic practice through education, production, and exhibition. InterAccess is regarded as a preeminent Canadian arts and technology centre.



Pollinating Proxies
Colin Rosati
January 23 - February 16, 2019

Opening Reception
Wednesday, January 23, 7pm-9pm

For over twenty years, the InterAccess Media Arts Prize has been granted annually to a graduating Integrated Media student at OCAD University whose work exhibits excellence and innovation in new media practice.

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A hummingbird beats its wings at 1,260 beats per minute (BPM), creating the illusion of floating mid-air. The subject of Colin Rosati's exhibition, titled *Pollinating Proxies*, uses the near-weightlessness of the hummingbird, coupled with its desire to consume, as a through line to think about the attention economy of the 21st-century mediated by screens. Rosati makes no distinction between the screens of televisions, cameras, computers, and phones.

Rosati's single-channel video piece *Pollinating Proxies* acts as an anchor for the show and a lens through which to read the rest of the installation. An image of a hummingbird in front of an artificially-blurred backdrop, a deceptive trick used to replicate depth of field for a subject too quick to manually achieve the technique, appears on the screen. A caption reading, "Cameras show a world that is different to how the human eye perceives," hovers underneath.

The way we see has shifted with technology, our thoughts suspended waiting for an image on a screen to fill the void. In *Aesthetics of Disappearance*, Paul Virilio writes, "the invention of photography, of the photogramme, that is of instant photography, and of cinematography, from that moment onwards one enters into an aesthetic of disappearance... things owe their exist-

tence to the fact that they disappear."¹ Images on screens have a magnetic pull, we trust the glare of the screen to tell us where and what to look at—only for the image to disappear and be replaced by another. The moments in between content, of disappearance, create a surge of desire that propels a chase.

Hot Sugar Spoils in the Sun replicates the eye's, and by extension, the camera's, habit of going in and out of focus; seeing and not seeing, both products of over-consumption. When too many objects fill a camera frame, too quickly, the image blurs. When we look at a screen for too long, our vision goes hazy and the images combine. The more images we consume, the more we desire, until the image blurs and we physically are unable, our eyes weak with visual information.

In 1951, Simone Weil wrote, "Above all, our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything... All wrong translations, all absurdities in geometry problems, all clumsiness of style and all faulty connection of ideas... all such things are due to the fact that thought has seized upon some idea too hastily and being this prematurely blocked, is not open to the truth. The cause is always that we have wanted to be too active; we have wanted to carry out a search."² Our proxy in Rosati's work, the hummingbird, embodies the active search Weil

writes about, which leads it to the consumption of the poisonous foxglove flower.

"Hummingbirds metabolize nectar almost instantly because it is largely sugar, establishing a high demand of consumption," the text flashes in Rosati's video. Perhaps the consumption screens demand is poison itself, leading us to ignore our surroundings. Rosati pointedly leaves the infrastructure of devices and walls transparent, drawing our attention to the physical props of over-consumption that we are typically blind to.

The flurry of the hummingbird can be made, with ease, into a metaphor for the speed of the internet and resulting attention economy. At close consideration, nuances between the use of an artificially constant backdrop, coupled with chaotic and unpredictable content, emerges. In the case of hummingbird photography, the artificially blurred backdrop is used to allow our eye to focus on the fluttering subject. The same is seen on the Internet. With social media, the static borders that stay the same as we scroll through an app work as a fixed point, a familiarity, where the eye can linger as the content in front of it rapidly shifts.

A sculptural piece, also titled *Pollinating Proxies*, is paired with the video; a physical manifestation of attention. A disc rotates at 7,200 rotations per minute (RPM),

blurring the image of the hummingbird. As it spins, a third image presents itself, a hummingbird mid-flight. The device is a reworking of a 19th-century moving image device called the Thaumatrope. In the exhibit, the re-worked Thaumatrope spins on top of an internal hard drive, the components on display.

The transparency of objects is replicated in the installation *Hot Sugar Spoils in the Sun*, which consists of a deconstructed room, a single panel of drywall still intact. As Virilio said in a 1993 interview, "In some way, you can read the importance given today to glass and transparency as a metaphor of the disappearance of matter... In a certain sense, the screen became the last wall. No wall out of stone, but of screens showing images. The actual boundary is the screen."³ The transparency replicates the tension apparent in technology: even when we see through it, we still are powerless to it. The poisonous nectar, foxglove, that draws the hummingbird in.

Pollinating Proxies begins with white text on a black backdrop: "Seeing is believing." But is it? Rosati guides our eye to the physical infrastructure that supports the attention economy of screens, reminding us of the aesthetic of disappearance at play.

Notes

1. Virilio, Paul. 1991. *The aesthetics of disappearance*. New York, N.Y.: Semiotext(e).
2. Weil, Simone. 1951. *Concerning the Our Father*. New York, N.Y.
3. Virilio, Paul. 1993. *Architecture in the Age of Its Virtual Disappearance: An Interview with Paul Virilio*.