

## About the Artists

Based in Montréal, [Anna Eyler](#) holds a BA in Religious Studies and Art History from Carleton University (2010) and a BFA from the University of Ottawa (2015). She is currently an MFA candidate in Sculpture and Ceramics at Concordia University (2017-). Recent awards include the Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship (2017), the Desjardins Academic Scholarship (2018), and the Emerging Digital Artist Award (2018). Eyler's work will be exhibited at the Currents New Media Festival (Santa Fe, 2019) and at PAVED Arts (Saskatoon, 2020).

[Aksel Haagensen](#) is an Estonian-Australian artist based in Estonia. Haagensen has participated in group exhibitions and video art festivals across Estonia and Europe. Using various media, his work focuses on combining various forms of documentary with an installation-based approach. Haagensen is currently studying in the Contemporary Art Master's program at the Estonian Academy of Arts.

With a background in documentary, [Lisa Jackson](#) expanded into fiction with SAVAGE, which won a Genie award for Best Short Film. She is known for her cross-genre projects including VR, animation, performance art, film, and a musical. Playback Magazine named her One of 10 to Watch and her work has played at festivals internationally, including Berlinale, Hot Docs, SXSW, Tribeca, and London BFI, as well as airing on many networks in Canada.

[Raquel Meyers](#) is a Spanish artist who defines her practice as KYBDslöjd (drawing / crafting by typing) with technology from the past. Woven with Commodore 64 characters sets, flickering in teletext, or fed to fax machines, her world of mythical creatures and dreamlike pilgrimages is one of patience and resolve. Frame-by-frame and glyph-by-glyph, we descend into a jagged wonderland where time stands still and chaos reigns.

[Matthew Plummer-Fernandez](#) is a British/Colombian artist that creates sculpture, software, online interventions, and installations, often in connection, producing and reflecting on contemporary social and computational entanglements and configurations. He received an MA from the Royal College of Art, 2009 and is completing a practice-based doctorate at Goldsmiths, University of London. He runs the popular blog Algopop on algorithms in every day life. His work has been presented extensively, including solo shows at iMal in collaboration with JODI, and Nome Gallery in Berlin. His works have been acquired by the Pompidou in Paris, and commissioned by the V&A in London, and AND Festival, Manchester. He is currently represented by Nome Gallery and is an invited resident at Somerset House Studios.

Grégory Lasserre and Anaïs met den Ancxt are two artists who work together as a duo under the name [Scenocosme](#). They develop the concept of interactivity in their artworks by using multiple expressions: art, technology, sound, and architecture. They mix art and digital technology in order to find substances of dreams, poetics, sensitivities, and delicacies. They also explore invisible relationships with our environment: they can feel energetic variations of living beings. They design interactive artworks, and choreographic collective performances, in which spectators share extraordinary sensory experiences.

[Jeff Thompson](#) is an artist, programmer, and educator based in the NYC area. Through code, sculpture, sound, and performance, Thompson's work physicalizes and gives materiality to otherwise invisible technological processes. Thompson earned an MFA from Rutgers University in 2006. He serves as Assistant Professor and Program Director of Visual Art & Technology at Stevens Institute of Technology.

## Inter/Access

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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.

Future Relics  
Curated by Katie Micak and Martin Zeilinger

Opening Reception  
Thursday, July 11, 2019  
7PM-10PM

Vector Festival is a participatory and community-oriented initiative dedicated to showcasing digital games and creative media practices. Presenting works across a dynamic range of exhibitions, screenings, performances, lectures, and workshops, Vector acts as a critical bridge between emergent digital platforms and new media art practice. The festival was founded in 2013 as the "Vector Game Art & New Media Festival" by an independent group of artists and curators: Skot Deeming, Clint Enns, Christine Kim, and Katie Micak, who were later joined by Diana Poulsen and Martin Zeilinger.

# FUTURE RELICS

*An essay by Katie Micak and Martin Zeilinger,  
Curators of Vector Festival 2019*

Anna Eyler  
Aksel Haagensen  
Lisa Jackson  
Raquel Meyers  
Matthew Plummer-Fernandez  
Scenocosme  
Jeff Thompson

July 11 - August 17, 2019



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How will post-extinction media archaeologists rediscover our lost civilisation? What will ‘smart’ devices have to say about the last days of humanity? What survivable futures might already be inscribed in the technologies and digital tools we use today? *Future Relics*, this year’s Vector Festival flagship exhibition, presents media artists whose work oscillates between the playful and the critical, the hopeful and the dystopian, offering insights and outlooks at the interface between digital culture and its environments.

By all accounts (except perhaps the most flat-earthly ones), humanity might soon succeed in erasing itself from the face of the earth, through the most complex techno-scientific undertaking in human history: self-inflicted extinction by way of planetary-scale ‘terraforming’ (a.k.a. environmental destruction). We don’t seem to have settled on a name for this unique project but depending on who you ask, it might happen sooner than we think, perhaps as soon as in a few decades.

What is to be done? An “Extinction Rebellion” is clearly required, but nobody has fully figured out how to pull this off. And so, many turn to science, or to religion, or to technology, in the hope of finding critical frameworks that can help us think it all through. But what might art – as yet another mode of interfacing with the world – have to offer at this moment of what Benjamin Bratton has called the ‘anthropocenic precipice’?<sup>1</sup> Invoking an ongoing project by Daniel Arsham in its title, the exhibition *Future Relics* explores

how the issue of humanity’s impact on Earth resonates with(in) art practices that proceed digitally in order to engage the issues facing the material world. What future relics will the concepts, techniques, and aesthetic artifacts of contemporary media art become? How can they help us to imagine what Alan Weisman has called ‘The World Without Us,’<sup>2</sup> or to speculate on scenarios in which we can, against all odds, continue to co-exist with the world?

The works in *Future Relics* construct speculative ecologies of ‘human-world interaction.’ As Donna Haraway has argued, the Anthropocene shouldn’t be seen so much as an epoch, but rather as a ‘boundary event.’<sup>3</sup> If we are really witnessing a deep time transition phase, rather than the soon-to-end zenith of human’s domination over the world, then perhaps through media art we can navigate the hard-to-grasp techno-scientific, socio-economic, ecological, political, and cultural nature of the epochal shift that is unfolding around us. Perhaps media art can simulate – experimentally and playfully – where we are headed, and how we got where we are now. Perhaps the alternative realities it constructs hold insights regarding the present, and workable prototypes for radically new directions that lead across and beyond the aesthetic into habitable futures.

Even in the face of mass extinction and the post-human, media art articulates futurity, and can restore a sense of optimism that might, hopefully, motivate us to act. Matthew

Plummer-Fernandez’s *Echo Alarm* (2019), for example, collects signs and posters of young climate protesters and transposes them into an augmented reality realm where they can become shareable, urgent reminders of our responsibility to live and act with care for each other and the environment. By contrast, Aksel Haagen’s theatrical sculpture *Do Androids Dream of the Apocalypse* (2019) imagines a quite different moment in our planet’s life cycle, one in which two left-over ‘smart’ devices are caught in a looping dialogue full of Beckettian humor and existential dread – really now: what is an IoT device to do when those who built it made the planet uninhabitable in the process?

Other works in the exhibition could be approached as post-human media archeological artifacts, perhaps awaiting their rediscovery and analysis by a surviving (or newly emerged) intelligence. Jeff Thompson’s *Pebble Dataset* (2018) is comprised of 5,000 high-resolution scans of pebbles collected during an artist residency at Cambridge University, UK. In the exhibited video, each pebble morphs into its nearest neighbour in the dataset, as if an experiment was being run to find one of a myriad of pebble-morphing iterations that might hold an answer to the environmental and ecological folly of humankind. Along a similar line of thought, *Echoes* (2016), by the French duo Scenocosme (Grégory Lasserre & Anaïs met den Ancxt), is a sonification of the quasi-environmental data contained in the growth rings of a mulberry tree, sounding out its own swan song of the Anthro-

pocene. In the VR installation *Biidabaan: First Light* (2018), by Lisa Jackson (in collaboration with Mathew Borrett, Jam3, and the National Film Board of Canada), the environmental insights that might be gleaned by an imagined future observer are framed in somewhat starker tones: here, Toronto is already in a post-human state of decay, but has simultaneously achieved a new kind of balance, in which the city has returned to the original languages of this land. By contrast, Anna Eyler’s *PAN/PAN* (2018) draws a speculative image of the future in which advanced technologies of exploration have resulted in new and wondrous shapes and forms that we can’t easily be pinpointed as residue, continuation, or mutation of humankind. Raquel Meyer’s *Totem* (2018), lastly, reaches backwards to 8-bit aesthetics and cultures of videogame worship (perfect for all kinds of doomsday scenarios) to imagine how the end days might one day be mythologised.

What unites the works in *Future Relics* is that we can read them as counterpoints to what Kim Stanley Robinson, a key science fiction writer of our time, has called ‘the Dithering,’<sup>4</sup> i.e., the period of collective undecidedness in the face of a coming cataclysm. Offering perspectives that range from the thought-provoking to the disturbing, from the sly to the funny, the works in *Future Relics* signal that the time of dithering must be over. In combination, they chart speculative and feasible, possible and imagined points of access to the most pressing issue of our time – how to think

about cultivating the “attentive practices of thought, love, rage, and care”<sup>5</sup> that are so urgently needed if we want to save ourselves and the world.

## Notes

1. Bratton, Benjamin. (2013) "Some Trace Effects of the Post-Anthropocene: On Accelerationist Geopolitical Aesthetics," e-flux journal #46, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/46/60076/some-trace-effects-of-the-post-anthropocene-on-accelerationist-geopolitical-aesthetics/>
2. Weisman, A. (2017) *The World Without Us*, St. Martin’s Thomas Dunne Books.
3. Haraway, Donna (2015) "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," *Environmental Humanities* 6, pp. 159-165
4. Robinson, Kim Stanley (2013) *2312*, Orbit Publishers.
5. Haraway, Donna (2016) "Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene," e-flux journal #76, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67125/tentacular-thinking-anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene/>

## About the authors

**KATIE MICAK** is an artist, curator, and researcher with a focus on performance as it relates to digital art-making practices. She received her MFA from Syracuse University in Art Video, and holds an MA in Digital Futures from OCADU. Micak has worked as an educator, in exhibition design, and art presentation at The Phillips Collection (D.C.), was Gallery Director at Propeller Gallery (Toronto) and Spark Contemporary Art Space (Syracuse, NY), and was on the founding curatorial team of the Vector Festival in 2013. @KatieMicak / katiemicak.com

**MARTIN ZEILINGER** is a new media researcher, curator, and practitioner, working on digital art in relation to appropriation, financialization, AI, and intellectual property. He is currently working on completing a monograph on these topics; his research has been widely published in academic books and journals and translated into several languages. Martin currently works as Senior Lecturer in Media at Anglia Ruskin University (Cambridge/UK). Most recently, he has published an essay on blockchain art in the catalogue for the exhibition *Vertiginous Data* (National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul/Korea), and has completed co-editing a special issue of the journal *Media Theory*. This year, he has also joined the curatorial collective at NEoN Festival (Dundee, Scotland). @mrtznlgr / marjz.net)