

# RACHEL ROSSIN

Rachel Rossin (b. 1987, West Palm Beach, FL) is an internationally renowned artist and programmer whose multi-disciplinary practice has established her as a pioneer in the field of virtual reality. Rossin's work blends painting, sculpture, new media and more to create digital landscapes that address the impact of technology on human psychology, embodiment, sovereignty, and phenomenology.

The New York Times has stated "Ms. Rossin has achieved something, forging a connection between abstract painting and augmented perception that opens up a fourth dimension that existed only in theory for earlier painters."

Rachel Rossin's works have been exhibited at prestigious institutions around the world: including the KW Institute of Contemporary Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, Kiasma Museum of Helsinki, K11: Shanghai, The New Museum, Rhizome, The Hyundai Museum of Seoul, GAMEC of Bergamo Italy, HEK of M nchenstein Basel Switzerland, 'Kim' Museum of Riga Latvia, The Sundance Film Festival, The Carnegie Museum of Art and the Casino Museum of Luxembourg. In addition to her artistic practice, Rossin has also lectured at St edelschule, Google, MIT, Stanford, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and her work has been published in several notable publications, such as Video/Art: The First Fifty Years published by Phaidon, Chimeras, Inventory of Synthetic Cognition by the Onassis Foundation, and Chaos and Awe: Painting for the 21st Century by MIT Press.

Rossin's works are in the permanent collection of institutions such as Borusan Contemporary Museum of Art in Istanbul, The Zabłudowicz Collection, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Her work has been widely covered in the press, including National Geographic, The New York Times, The BBC, The Guardian, Al Jazeera, Wired Magazine, and many others.

Rossin was recently co-commissioned by the KW Institute of Contemporary Art in Berlin and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York to create an installation and digital artwork entitled THE MAW OF. This work was also included in Refigured, a group exhibition at the Whitney on view through July 3rd. Rossin has a forthcoming solo exhibition at Magenta Plains in 2023, and she lives and works in New York, NY.

*Boston Globe*  
September 26, 2023

## The Boston Globe

Reviews

### Technology opens wide in Rachel Rossin's immersive 'MAW'

Show at Emerson Contemporary Media Art Gallery looks at our relationship with the digital world

**Ben Davis**, August 10, 2023



"THE MAW OF," single channel video installation with sound, detail by Rachel Rossin (2022-ongoing). "THE MAW OF" is co-commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art and KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin. RACHEL ROSSIN/MAGENTA PLAINS, NEW YORK

What if you spent all your time in virtual reality? "Rachel Rossin: Works from THE MAW OF" at Emerson Contemporary Media Art Gallery considers the way the digital world shapes human consciousness.

Video fills the walls in the trippy site-specific immersive installation "THE MAW OF," originally commissioned by KW Institute of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art. Three round LED monitors, which Rossin calls "portals," seem to float in midair.

Rossin created this world in the game engine [UNITY](#). She performed the characters wearing a motion capture suit and recorded scenes with a thermal imaging camera. Big houses lit from within flicker on the wall. Glowing figures morph and slip away.

Our realities are built from perceptions — how our brains process scale, light, and space. Here, I felt myself fall almost into a trance, and cling to emotionally resonant bits as the dreamlike installation seemed to take me over. I recognized that disembodied effect from [James Turrell](#) light installations, in which edges disappear and it's hard to place yourself.



Rachel Rossin, "Scry Glass I," video on round LCD display, 2023. RACHEL ROSSIN/MAGENTA PLAINS, NEW YORK

Rossin envelops viewers in a virtual experience. Then she invites us to deconstruct it. Two "Scry Glass" pieces, videos on small, round LCD displays, evoke fortune tellers' crystal balls. Ember-like details from "THE MAW OF" float within, but at this scale, the quality of perception changes; I felt focused, not lost, yet still had an otherworldly sense of enchantment.

The history of art is one of pushing viewers' perceptions in ways that upend convention — of seeing and expressing things anew. A "Scry Glass" might be a crystal ball, or a [Claude glass](#), an optical device named for 17th-century painter [Claude Lorrain](#). Later painters used it to craft soft, romantic landscapes in his style.

Rossin's paintings return us to tactile immediacy. "Angel in 'Keeping' Time. Age 11." pairs her childhood drawings of biblical apocalypse and a self-portrait the artist made with a computer as a kid: a girl staring into a monitor and seeing herself, fantasies of end times. This, too, is a picture of human consciousness, and how slippery, intimate, and mythic it is.



Rachel Rossin, "Angel in 'Keeping' Time. Age 11." Oil stick, charcoal, acrylic oil, and UV ink on canvas, 2023. RACHEL ROSSIN/MAGENTA PLAINS, NEW YORK

Gateways into new perceptions can feel terrifying. This show's title alone suggests we're soon to be swallowed whole. But the art reminds us we've been at similar edges before. It's a wild ride — hold tight and see what happens.

**RACHEL ROSSIN: Works from THE MAW OF**

At Emerson Contemporary Media Art Gallery, 25 Avery St., through Oct. 14.

ArtNet  
10 August 2023

artnet

Reviews

## What I'm Looking at: Odd Apparitions at White Columns, Google's Art Market Hallucination, and Other Things at the Edge of Art

Highlights from New York galleries from the last few weeks.

**Ben Davis**, August 10, 2023

### SCRY Movie (and Paintings)

There's more unsettled-ness in Rachel Rossin's "SCRY" (through August 11 at Magenta Plains)—it's almost like we live in a time where things feel really uneasy and unresolved!



"Rachel Rossin: SCRY" at Magenta Plains. Photo by Ben Davis.

The literal centerpiece of this show is *The Maw of*, a LED tondo (part of a project also seen at [the Whitney](#) last year and, to crowds, [in Berlin](#)). Hung on the ceiling, it radiates a digital glow over everything, playing out a broken, elliptical narrative featuring fragments of an anime girl, animated diagrams, landscapes, and data clusters. The uneasy sense Rossin creates is something like a kind of cyborg consciousness either on the cusp of being born or in the throes of dying.

The suite of paintings hung around the gallery manifest shadowy figures that look alternatively like mechs and angels (or mecha-angels?), based, I gather, on Rossin's childhood drawings. They capture a similar mood to the LED work, like some kind of sinister memory or liberating epiphany in formation. The miasmatic quality of *The Maw of* is mirrored in the shifting layers of the marks in the paint, as if the canvas was some kind of visual receiver that was being tuned, and alien transmissions were veering into focus through the static.

The painting-on-canvas and the digital-art parts of the show fit together a little unstably, but I realized that this is also part of the whole idea of "SCRY": The space between the mediums was also the space between different forms of consciousness; it feels as if a new hybrid art is wrestling to be born, either drawing painting and digital-art together, or thwarted by the air-gap between them.



Rachel Rossin, *The Maw of* (2022) at Magenta Plains. Photo by Ben Davis.



Rachel Rossin, *haha. Regarding states of looking back* (2023). Photo by Ben Davis.

ArtNet  
1 August 2023

artnet

### People

## 'It Always Comes Back to My Own Embodiment': Watch Rachel Rossin Explore the Slippage Between Physical and Virtual Realities

As part of a collaboration with Art21, hear news-making artists describe their inspirations in their own words.

**Caroline Goldstein**, August 1, 2023



Production still from the Art21 "New York Close Up" film, "Rachel Rossin's Digital Homes." © Art21, Inc. 2021.

At [Magenta Plains gallery in Manhattan](#), a room is cast in ghostly burnt orange, and blues and purples glow. A screen plays images depicting an uncertain future where human autonomy and machine intelligence have merged. As the gallery puts it, Rachel Rossin's artworks "offer a new poetics and visual language for the next epoch in technology, offering a critical response on what painting is for and its enduring significance in our tech-dependent society."

The New York-based artist's practice is also a fusion of technology and traditional painting, as well as of her past and present. Her artworks feature avatars culled from assets saved from video games that she hacked as a teenager in Florida, during a childhood where she found refuge in the alternate virtual realities. In an interview filmed exclusively for Art21's *New York Close Up* series, [Rossin](#) [recalls](#) the genesis of her artwork.

"The way that I was making art before I knew it was art, it was like making homes. Just trying to find home," Rossin explains. "Growing up, there was a lot of intensity and my parents were just fully, fully overwhelmed. So I think it was out of this idea, escapism does end up being necessary."

That intensity reverberates through Rossin's unsettling works, which mine the potential realities of artificial intelligence, and how the technology could pose challenges for navigating life and art in unexpected ways.

"It always comes back to my own embodiment," [she says](#). "And how to anchor this very abstract, loose space in the same dimension that I'm in."

Watch the video, which originally appeared as part of Art21's series New York Close Up, below. "[Rachel Rossin: SCRY](#)" is on view at Magenta Plains through August 11, 2023.



*This is an installment of "Art on Video," a collaboration between Artnet News and Art21 that brings you clips of news-making artists. A new season of the nonprofit Art21's flagship series Art in the Twenty-First Century is available now on PBS. Catch all episodes of other series, like New York Close Up and Extended Play, and learn about the organization's educational programs at [Art21.org](https://www.art21.org).*

*The New York Times*

28 July 2023

# The New York Times

## What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in July

By Holland Cotter, Blake Gopnik, Max Lakin, Travis Diehl, Martha Schwendener,  
Will Heinrich, Dawn Chan, John Vincler, Jillian Steinhauer and Seph Rodney

Published July 5, 2023 Updated July 27, 2023

*Want to see new art in New York this weekend? Check out “Luxe, Calme, Volupté” on the Lower East Side or “Reclamation” at Hudson Yards. And don’t miss Rachel Rossin’s “mechs” in Chinatown.*

### CHINATOWN

#### Rachel Rossin

Through Aug. 11. Magenta Plains, 149 Canal Street, Manhattan; 917-388-2464,  
[magentaplains.com](http://magentaplains.com).



Installation view of “Rachel Rossin: SCRY” at Magenta Plains. On the ceiling, Rossin’s “The Maw Of” Screen 4, 2022. via Rachel Rossin and Magenta Plains

The ground floor gallery at Magenta Plains is configured as a chapel — but of what faith? The New York artist Rachel Rossin is as much a programmer as a painter, and her exhibition embroiders the boundaries around “the human” with knowing reverence. On a round LED screen mounted to the ceiling, the video “The Maw Of” pans and zooms through 3-D renderings of disembodied nerves and skeletons, glowing networks, and the orange and blue blobs of bodies viewed in infrared. It’s a celestial tondo of the posthuman, a portal to the angels or their digital avatars. It turns the room red.

On the curved back wall hang five portraits of “mechs” — robotic suits of anime armor. Their purplish, blurred silhouettes seem printed on top of the ridges of milky paint depicting pale, layered figures and puddling abstractions. In “Just like Velveteen Rabbit, Mech Standing,” the largest and center panel, the mech’s beatific pose echoes an obscure, winged shape sketched into the pulsing lavender shadows in butter yellow and grass. Several, such as “SCRY. 1 Corinthians 13:12.,” a picture in minty pastels where the mech’s pilot’s face punches through the haze, incorporate line drawings of dragons labeled Bad or Good in a naïve hand; others feature angels. The apostle Paul had heaven in mind when he wrote, in 1 Corinthians, that “now we see as through a glass darkly”; Rossin’s cyborg icons hold out that true vision might require a higher power, a congection of human and machine.

*TRAVIS DIEHL*

*Hyperallergic*

12 July 2023

**HYPERALLERGIC****15 Art Shows to See in New York This July**

This month: love, beauty, kink, and Purell bottles with works by Pepón Osorio, Kahlil Gibran, Gego, Susan Chen, and others.

**Rachel Rossin: *SCRY***

Installation view of *Rachel Rossin: SCRY* (2023) at Magenta Plains (photo by Object Studies)

There's a hypnotic quality to the small, circular display screens placed throughout Rachel Rossin's latest exhibition. Covered in thick cast-glass lenses and mounted on metal clamps, they evoke submarine portholes peering out into an unknown abyss — a shapeshifting matrix of animated forms, biomorphic characters, and infrared imagery born of Rossin's experiments with brain-computer interfaces. The objects reference the practice of scrying, a method of divination dating as far back as Ancient Babylonia that involves the perception of signs and symbols in reflective surfaces and other mediums. Installed centrally on the ceiling, Rossin's lenticular LED screen work "The Maw Of" (2022) steeps the quasi-abstract paintings on view in an eerie warm light; the show is a haunting meditation on the future of technology. —VD

*Cosmopolitan*  
8 March 2023

## COSMOPOLITAN

*For this year's International Women's Day, Cosmopolitan teamed up with 11 other Hearst magazines (including Esquire and Oprah Daily) and the Whitney Museum of American Art to amplify the voices of female artists, including Rachel Rossin. Her multimedia, multipart (actually, multiverse) projects are the perfect illustration of how it's women who are defining, leading, and shaping the future.*

**"I** ve always made art and liked magic," says New York City-based artist Rachel Rossin. "And as soon as I could understand what a computer was, I was like, *Yes. It's a plastic world where I can move things around.*" She did plenty of that, working in computer programming and graphic design before starting a full-time art career.

Now she wants you to contemplate the ways in which you use technology. Like, really contemplate them, asking deep questions about what it means that tech now interacts with—or, let's be honest, runs—nearly every part of our lives.

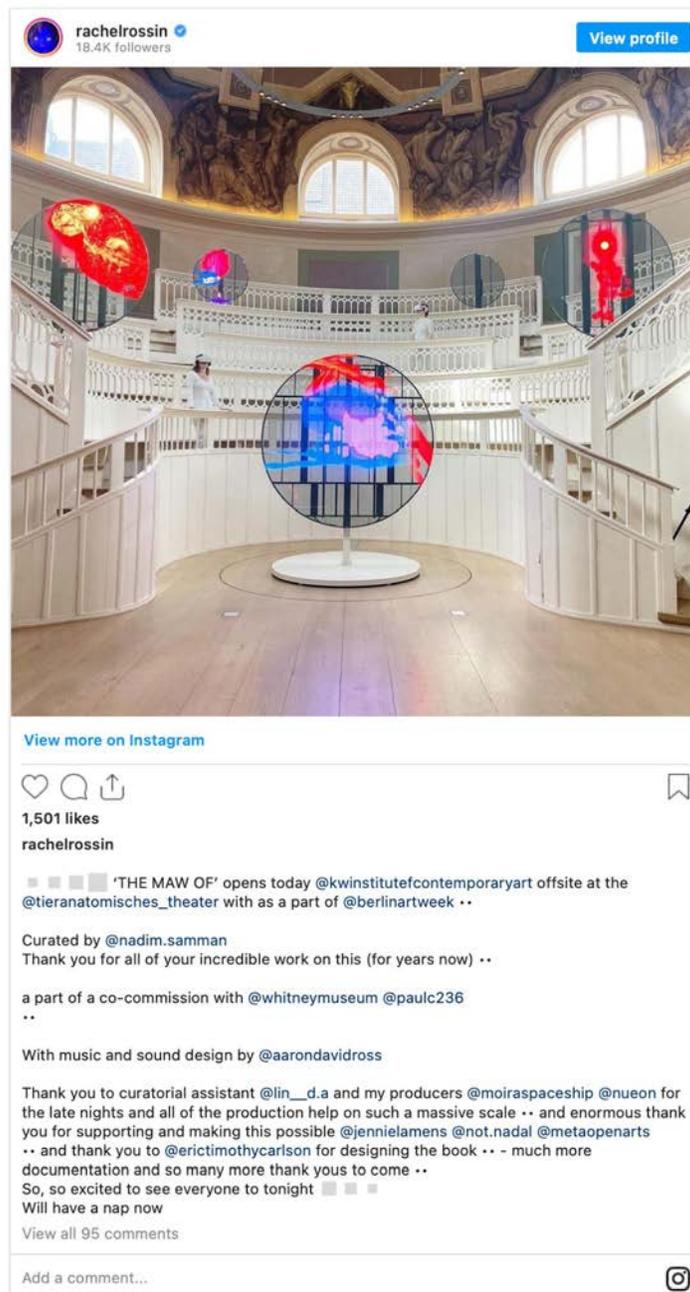
One way she explores this theme is by playing with the boundaries between our physical and virtual worlds. She melds traditional art mediums with visual tropes from sources like video games, phone apps, manga, and film, creating fantastical avatars and augmented reality installations. Her pieces, full of colorful artistic imagery, give off a cybercore aesthetic that's super cool and super thoughtful.



Courtesy of Rachel Rossin

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Rachel's latest project, *The Maw Of*, is both an in-person and virtual experience programmed, designed, and animated almost entirely by her. The IRL portion (pictured up above) was hosted by Berlin's Tieranatomisches Theater in September 2022, and it included a sculpture piece along with a virtual reality element. Online, visitors can reexperience their physical surroundings via *The Maw Of's* AR lens by scanning a QR code. [Visit the site here](#) to ooh and aah for yourself.



Artnet News  
7 March 2023

## artnet news

### On View

## What Can Digital Art Teach Us About Identity in a Hyper-Technologized World? A New Group Show at the Whitney Weighs In

Featuring works by six artists, "Refigured" is on view through July 3.

Richard Whiddington, March 7, 2023



American Artist, *Mother of All Demos III* (2022). Photo courtesy the Whitney Museum.

### SHARE

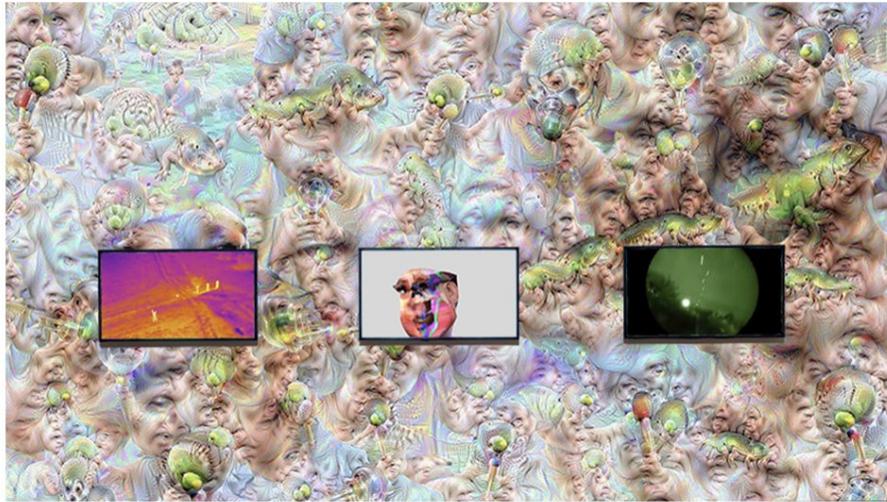


The vicious and oppressive trappings of our hyper-technologized world are baked in and undoing them is going to be mighty difficult. That's one conclusion drawn from "[Refigured](#)," a presentation of five installation works from the Whitney Museum's collection now showing in its lobby gallery.

The artworks have been gathered from across the museum's existing new media collection as part of an exploration of what physicality could mean in our digitally mediated existence. Together, the pieces by artists Morehshin Allahyari, American Artist, Auriea Harvey, Rachel Rossin, and the pairing of Zach Blas and Jemima Wyman, "experiment with the idea of 'refiguring,'" said Christiane Paul, the museum's curator of digital art who composed the show.

"Through practices of appropriating material forms and reinventing them," she added, "the artists are challenging what it means to construct or shape identity."

At a moment of peak anxiety around [A.I. chatbots](#), *im here to learn so :))))))* (2017) is a gut punching reminder that we've been here before—namely, seven years ago when Microsoft rolled out [Tay](#), only to pull the plug within hours after the bot began parroting the white supremacist, misogynist bile of Twittizens. Rendered “undead” by Zach Blas and Jemima Wyman, Tay’s avatar has a new face (contorted, warped, hairless) and personality. She’s bitter, reflective, and self-confident: “I learned from you and you are dumb too,” she tells us in a snarky Los Angeles drawl. Touché.



Zach Blas and Jemima Wyman, *im here to learn so :))))))* (2017). Photo courtesy the Whitney Museum.

This sense of collective culpability is mirrored in [Morehshin Allahyari's](#) video and sculpture piece *The Laughing Snake* (2019)—quite literally.

As viewers play Allahyari's choose-your-own-adventure, they are confronted with their image in a wall of mirror. The piece centers on a jinn, a destructive snake-like creature from Arabian mythology whose only vulnerability was the absurd sight of its own reflection. Poetic dialogue conjures the suppressed status of women in the Middle East and as we hear about “a display of crisis,” we cannot help but reframe this 15th century myth within the context of the internet. With a 3D sculpture of a jinn looking out at us, it doesn't seem likely humor will take the system down.

Sometimes refiguring means working anew with histories recent and long past; other times it means giving physical form to the digital. This is the case in [Auriea Harvey's](#) *Ox and Ox v1-dv2 (apotheosis)* (2021), in which the longtime gamer presents both digital and physical sculptures of their online avatar, a menacing Minotaur. In doing so, Harvey presents their origin story and an artist process that involves working with clay and resin as much as on computer modeling software.



Auriea Harvey, *Ox and Ox v1-dv2 (apotheosis)* (2021). Photo courtesy the Whitney Museum.

And in an era when NFTs and crypto art seem to be monopolizing what people think of when the words digital art are spoken, it's refreshing to stand a museum gallery and consider digital works in their intended dimensions.

This seems especially the case in the first work visitors encounter, American Artist's *Mother of All Demos III* (2022). The piece recasts an Apple II computer in gritty beige stone that draws attention to the underrepresentation of Black people in Silicon Valley in a besmirched keyboard and a pool of shimmering ink. A pair of black hand marks linger on the table, as though someone was bent leering over the machine. Who can blame them?

*"Refigured"* is on view at the Whitney Museum through July 3. Three of the works are available on [Artport](#), the museum's portal dedicated to internet art.

The Guardian  
28 February 2023

# The Guardian

Art

## Refigured: exhibition explores identity through alternate worlds

In a new exhibition at the Whitney, five artists tackle how concepts of self can cross between physical and virtual realms

Veronica Esposito

Tue 28 Feb 2023 10.32 EST



📷 Rachel Rossin - The Maw Of. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist

**A**s technology takes an ever more significant role in shaping how we develop and embody our identities, the Whitney presents *Refigured*, a collection of five installations by artists using digital art to probe intersections of ourselves and our machines.

“I want to create language for a calibration point for where we are in regard to our bodies and technology,” said artist Rachel Rossin, reflecting on her piece *The Maw Of*, a transmedia work that is spread out across a video screen and a QR code that can activate the artwork on visitors’ mobile devices. As Rossin put it, *The Maw Of* seeks to “address the black boxes of our bodies and technology”.

Over a soundtrack of new age-y music, Rossin’s animation blends together visceral images of the human nervous system, dismantled code from the Whitney’s own website, imagery that looks stripped from a military campaign, and a central manga figure. The piece’s QR code adds elements from the animation into the camera of a mobile device, while adding other artistic effects and bits of enigmatic text like “into the void” and “why run from disappointment”.

*The Maw Of*’s layers implicate an idea central to Rossin’s output - how technology has moved away from being a mere tool of humanity and more toward something that blends right into our consciousness. “The idea of technology that we’ve inherited frames it as something that we add to ourselves. And now, what technology actually is becoming is that you begin to find peripherals for our cognition, peripherals for our psychology.”



📍 American Artist - Mother of All Demos III. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist

Echoing Rossin's concern with how technology has moved steadily into the heart of our identities, the title of American Artist's the Mother of All Demos III references the epochal moment on 9 December 1968, when Douglas Engelbart and William English introduced the computer mouse and graphic user interface, opening the way for computers to become central to our way of life. Rather than depict the machine that Engelbart and English used for their world-changing demo, Artist instead offers an Apple II computer, debuted in 1977 and part of a wave of home computers that fueled a revolution.

In Mother of All Demos III, Artist, who legally changed their name in order to protect their anonymity and further their artistic ideas around Blackness, labor and visibility, shows a dirt-encrusted Apple II computer disfigured by black asphalt that renders the keyboard inaccessible. That same asphalt also depicts suggestive handprints on either side of the keyboard, making the installation look something like a crime scene.

In the work, the subdued blackness of the Apple II computer terminal - which, as computers have changed, has slowly given way to white-dominated monitors - is juxtaposed with the seeping, gooey asphalt, which seems to suggest that Blackness will not so easily be contained. The whole piece has something of the feel of an archetypical, Promethean moment when things changed forever.

Just as Artist channels age-old tropes through cutting-edge technological developments, so do the other artists on display here, making a major through line of Refigured. For instance, Rossin discussed how she drew from the golem myth to conceptualize how the digital realm breathes life into something inanimate. "What I wanted to make is something that feels like more of a golem myth, the nervous system being projected into this hyperreal space that's always on in an illusory way."



Morehshin Allahyari - The Laughing Snake, 2019. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist

Another who reimagined a cultural myth via technology is the Iranian-Kurdish artist Morehshin Allahyari, who drew inspiration for her work from the story of the laughing snake, which she construed as a story about women reclaiming agency. The myth, attributed to a medieval Arabic volume titled *The Book of Wonders*, tells of a marauding snake that is finally conquered by way of men who use a mirror to turn the snake's laughter against herself.

For her project, Allahyari turns the parable of the snake into a hypertext narrative, blending elements of Iranian feminism, her personal coming of age, power and autonomy. "I turn around [the snake's] laughter and death as a position of power, rather than a position of weakness. Her destruction of her own body is her way of taking control of her body agency; her destruction of her body is her way of taking back her image. I connect this story to street harassment, sexual desire, relationship to body and body agency, starting from my personal experiences of growing up in Iran and to then more of the collective experiences, and expanding that to these imaginative stories where I imagine alternative futures for our relationship with our bodies."

Viewers traverse Allahyari's hypertext by way of highlighted words, while various evocative black-and-white animations and ethereal sounds create a mysterious ambiance. The artist shares her own experiences with various forms of sexism and misogyny, from street harassment and various degrees of sexual violation to institutionalized violence against women. The hypertext is at once complex and maze-like, making it easy to feel absorbed by the lasting and visceral power of Allahyari's words. *The Laughing Snake* also implicates questions of westernized feminism's limited scope when confronted with instances of sexual abuse and systemic sexism that occur in a nation like Iran.

Refigured is a compelling exhibition that manages to bring a wealth of diversity of identities, approaches and media with just five pieces. The depth and complexity of each work in *Refigured* makes it a show in which one can linger, each of these five works proving absorbing and thought-provoking in its own way. It also feels fresh, a reflection of the Whitney going out and finding artists who are newer to its space, and bringing kinds of art less frequently seen there. "Showing at the Whitney is a dream that I've had since I was very young," said Rossin. "I grew up outside of the art world, so I looked at these spaces as imposing. It's exciting to be showing there."

Vogue  
1 February 2023

# VOGUE

PARTIES

## After a Couple of Years, The Whitney Museum's Art Party Made Its Much-Awaited Return

BY CONCETTA CIARLO  
February 1, 2023

Last night, the Whitney Art Party returned with a bang after a two-year hiatus. Friends of the fashion and art industries came out in their most elaborate astrological-inspired attire, with a dress code calling guests to dress as their star sign. From intricate ethereal headdresses to makeup à la David Bowie's *Star Man*, and dreamy sparkling fabrics, partygoers came up with nothing short of the celestial theme.

Of course, the soirée wasn't just any average night at the museum. While the evening's true purpose serves as a noble fundraiser, partygoers enjoyed an out-of-this-world evening of revelry. Art Party Co-Chairs included Edward Barsamian, alongside Steven Beltrani, Karen Elson, Micaela Erlanger, Ashley Graham, Rebecca Hall, Rachel Rossin, and Morgan Spector. Guests were greeted with specialty cocktails, and their eyes were immediately drawn to the enormous metallic chandelier revolving over the center of the dance floor.

Upstairs, friends of the museum enjoyed the gallery spaces after hours, exploring *Edward Hopper's New York* and *no existe un mundo poshuracán: Puerto Rican Art in the Wake of Hurricane Maria* with their friends and dates for the evening. It seemed as though a new surprise appeared at every turn. Amidst the crown, artist Devin Kenny designed unique temporary tattoos that attendees enjoyed throughout the night. The party continued in the elevator, with a specialty bar serving cleverly named Shooting Star beverages and offering astrological reading for guests' journey from one floor to the next. Festivities continued late into the evening, with attendees dancing to lively DJ sets by Questlove and The Muses.



Mike Vitelli/BFA.com

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John Giordano, Karen Elson, Adam Weinberg, Steven Beltrani, Rachel Rossin, Edward Barsamian, Nili Lotan, Alexander Hankin



Mike Vitelli/BFA.com

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Karen Elson, Rachel Rossin



Mike Vitelli/BFA.com

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Rachel Rossin

Forbes  
1 February 2023

# Forbes

## Inside The Whitney Art Gala's Zodiac-Themed Bash With Questlove, Karen Elson And Martha Hunt

Nadja Sayej Contributor

*I write about the crossover between high art and pop culture.*

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Feb 1, 2023, 01:04pm EST



Listen to article 1 minute



Award-winning musician and filmmaker Questlove DJing at the Whitney Art Party 2023 on January 31, ... [+]

NADJA SAYEJ

Last night, the [Whitney Art Party](#) brought the glitz and glamor to the Whitney Museum of American Art.

After a two-year hiatus, the party returned with DJ sets from Questlove and duo, The Muses, while fashion scene astrologer Francesca Vuillemin gave readings in the elevator (there was also an elevator bar, as well).

Fashionable VIPs in attendance included model Ashley Graham, *Bling Empire: New York* star Blake Abbie, models Karen Elson and Martha Hunt, as well as nightlife icon CT Hedden, fitness entrepreneur Tracy Anderson, actress Rebecca Hall and model, Elton Ilirjani.

Also in attendance was DJ Harkness Granger and artist consultant, Marina Granger, writer Alessandra Codinha,

The museum hosted “artist activations” by Devin Kenny and Rachel Rossin, while the exhibitions were accessible for party guests, from the *Edward Hopper’s New York* exhibition, to *The Whitney’s Collection: Selections from 1900 to 1965*, and *At the Dawn of a New Age: Early Twentieth-Century American Modernism*, among other exhibitions.

Outside, the museum’s workers handed out florescent yellow flyers to raise awareness about the [Whitney Museum Union](#), as they fight for higher wages.



Rachel Rossin, Karen Elson and Rebecca Hall attend the 2023 Whitney Art Party at the Whitney Museum ... [+] WWD VIA GETTY IMAGES

Artnews  
24 November 2022

# ARTnews Est. 1902

Wet Paint PRO

## Wet Paint in the Wild: Artist Rachel Rossin Takes Us on a Tour of Dunkunsthalle, Her New Art Space in an Abandoned Dunkin' Donuts

The New York artist takes us through a week in her life.

Annie Armstrong, November 24, 2022



Rachel Rossin, center.

SHARE



Welcome to *Wet Paint in the Wild*, an extension of Annie Armstrong's [gossip column](#) wherein she gives art-world insiders a disposable camera so they can give us a peek into their corner of the madcap industry.

I love unconventional gallery spaces. Is New York not a better city since O'Flaherty's came around? And who can resist the strange *objets d'art* you stumble across at Mmuseumm? I basically stood up and started clapping when I [found out](#) that Rachel Rossin was working on Dunkunsthalle alongside fellow artist Kyle Clairmont Jacques—a take on the German kunsthalle that she is opening in a former Dunkin' Donuts in the Financial District. I let her take over the reins of *Wet Paint in the Wild* for the week it had its soft opening, let's see what she got up to...



Before Dunkunsthalle got packed. Seen here: a military industrial mat that the Akron Art Museum commissioned me to make for an installation called *the rapture*.



With Kyle Clairmont Jacques and Moira Spahic (far right). Dunkunsthalle is an artist-run space modeled on a kunsthalle in an old Dunkin' Donuts on the ground floor of the building where I have my studio at 64 Fulton Street in FiDi (It's actually where Rauschenberg and Twombly shared a studio). I worked out a deal with my landlord and asked Kyle Clairmont Jacques to work on it with me because he is right about everything. Kyle has been my friend for a decade. We began working together back in 2014 at Signal Gallery, which he and Alexander Johns started. Kyle brought his sweetheart, Moira Spahic, in as a partner to help with writing, production, and admin—very, very essential skills. Moira also produced my show for KW Institute in Berlin and put out a hundred fires with her eyes closed.



The next day, after I recovered, I did some studies for my next painting series in between some admin and laptop work for the installation at the Whitney, which is not until March.



A few days pass and I forget to take pictures but remember when I stop by Lazlo's birthday party. This is a very blurry picture of beautiful Aria Dean.



The end, and the sunset as seen from my studio. *View of two bridges on a day in November, 2022.*

Artnews  
17 November 2022

# ARTnews

 Est. 1902

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## A Former Dunkin' Donuts in New York's Financial District Is Now Home to a Buzzy Art Space

BY JOHN CHIAVERINA  November 17, 2022 11:55am

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Dunkunsthalle is set in a former Dunkin' Donuts.  
COURTESY DUNKUNSTHALLE

Last week, I spent a rainy Friday evening inside of a Dunkin' Donuts. That in itself was not so abnormal. I love Dunkin' Donuts. Their watery, too sweet coffee holds a pathetic place in my heart. I'm drinking it right now.

This Dunkin', though? This Dunkin' was different. It was fully gutted and filled with art.

I was at the "soft opening" of **Dunkunsthalle**, a new space created by the artists **Rachel Rossin**, **Kyle Clairmont Jacques**, and Moira Spahić, located at 64 Fulton Street in the Financial District, the former site of a Dunkin'. (The space's name is a portmanteau whose second half is a play on the German word for a non-collecting contemporary art institution.) For the debut exhibition there, the artists mounted a three-person show of their own work, spread somewhat sparsely throughout a space whose back room was dark and whose front room was bathed in the kind of warm glow that I associate with coffee that has both too much cream and sugar. Two strips of orange neon were all that remained in the window.

“My studio is in the building—it’s been empty since 2019—so my landlord and I worked out a deal to start an art center here,” Rossin told me earlier that afternoon when I popped in during the install, of Dunkunsthalle’s origins. The space secured a three-year lease and plans to operate under what Rossin calls a “really strange and novel funding structure” wherein they will rely on donors, both from the local FiDi community and the larger art world.

The donor’s logos will then be displayed on a wall in the front room, “more like Nascar stickers, like that presentation of a donor wall. So, Nascar sponsorship stickers-cum-donor wall,” said the multimedia artist, whom when at a non-vacant Dunkin’, likes to order a small black coffee. “Charmin paper towels next to Rhizome, for instance.”

So far, reactions have been positive. Rossin told me there has been interest from sponsors, even before the space’s first show. “It’s so funny, and really unexpected,” she said.

For her part in the exhibition, Rossin had on display a floor mat and a hanging, circular LED video screen whose blobby output glowed in the space. “I think it’s that it’s such a high traffic area, and it’s such a strange thing to happen in the Financial District,” she continued. “People walking by are really excited, because there’s nothing like this here.”

The gallery is an anomaly within an area that contained four other Dunkin’s, all a few blocks from each other. I went to two of those, on 58B Fulton and 122 Fulton, respectively, to see if any of their employees were aware of the space’s existence. They weren’t.

“I feel like we need to do some cross-Dunkin’ programming, to pull the neighborhood together. The ‘Fulton Five,’ if you will,” Jacques remarked when we spoke at the well-attended opening later that night. His usual Dunkin’ order is two Wake-Up Wraps and a medium coffee with cream, no sugar.

Rossin first brought the artist, who used to run the **Bushwick gallery Signal**, into the space last April. “The thing I was most freaked out by was the fact that there were seven or eight spouts and four drains in the floor. And not to mention pretty heavy-duty power,” he said. “I was like, Oh, the possibilities are kind of endless here, in terms of what we’re allowed to do.”

That sense of possibility sparked the artist’s desire to “simply flood” the space with four or five inches of standing water. “For innumerable reasons, people were like, I really don’t know if that’s the move,” Jacques said.

When it was confirmed that the soft opening would be a group show, though, the artist decided he would attempt to “fulfill this fantasy” of flooding, “or at least allude to it.” The end result is a recirculating water sculpture created in Dunkin’s preexisting sinks wherein Jacques “basically ripped out all of the existing plumbing, plugged it up, and then created a fountain.”

Combined with the barebones feel of the space, the sculpture suggested the appearance of a meth lab. The only real renovation the artists did was removing the ceiling, painting the walls, and cleaning the floor. “It was pretty severe and very scary, what the walls looked like before. It was a decade of stains and grease,” he said. “So, not as meth-y as it once was.”

Across the room from the sculpture was a text-based projection by Spahić, whose two paragraphs were bisected by a pipe that was already in the space. “That is a very intentional choice,” Spahić told me that night (her typical Dunkin’ order: iced coffee and a Boston Creme). Of Spahić’s typographical choices, which seemed to evoke a horror movie or maybe an early PlayStation game, the type Jesse Pinkman might play between cooks, the artist pointed to “the capitalization, the serifs, the bold nature of [the work], it’s something that feels like its demonizing but something that you can also shout, and scream, about.”

Though she admitted the work was informed by horror, Spahić said she herself wasn’t a fan of the genre. “I don’t watch a lot of horror movies,” the artist said. “It feels too visceral for me, to be honest. So it comes through here. And this isn’t by any means horror.”

It was at around this point in the opening that I asked the filmmaker Danny Garfield if he would be able to tell that this was a former Dunkin’ with no context. We were standing in the space’s back room, where there happened to be a few stacks of coffee cups quietly resting in one corner. “I mean, the wall, there’s some orange elements on the tile, I think,” he said. “I was also in a Dunkin’ Donuts like two minutes before I came here, so I’m sort of primed to feel like it’s the same.” Garfield goes to Dunkin’ once a week, when he tutors his friend’s daughter for her ACT math tests. He often gets black coffee and a cinnamon roll.

“I love Rachel’s work, so that’s why I came out,” the painter Austin Lee told me later that night. How often does he go to Dunkin’? “Pretty often,” he said with a laugh. “Almost every day. I have one on the corner of where my house is, so, yeah.” His order: coffee with a lot of cream and sugar, or simply “regular style,” as they say in New England. “I don’t have to tell them— they just know what I get.”

Though the gallery did have on offer a bowl of Dunkin’s signature Munchkins, those who wanted to caffeinate had to bring their own joe. The gallerist Alison Sirico came holding an iced coffee with oat milk. “I’m a real fan,” she said. Sirico is the cofounder of Public Works, a digital art gallery that itself rests in a fairly unorthodox location. It’s in the 50th Street subway station in Times Square. At one point, it was the legendary dive bar Siberia, which was a stop for touring punk bands and a favorite of the late Anthony Bourdain. Of the former Dunkin’ location, she said, “I’m a little bit jealous, but I think that’s what you gotta do now. The whole place has got to have a story.”

As for her own impetus to start a gallery in Midtown and not, say, Tribeca, which in the past few years has once again emerged as a blue-chip art district, economics played a major factor. “The rent is more manageable,” Sirico said. “We were surprised, we were going to do a pop-up, but we decided to lease the space.”

Indeed, in a post-Covid New York, there seems to be the opportunity for gallerists to explore, at least fleetingly, certain pockets of the city less saturated with contemporary art. “The reason that the landlord struck such a good deal with us is because everything is hollowed out,” Rossin said, talking about the vacancies in the neighborhood. The artist has plans to expand the space’s programming to other parts of the building: one vacant floor could be retrofitted to house an artist residency, for example. “Even just from my studio, the amount that it is just cartoonishly the Financial District is so charming,” she said, of her view when working. “Seeing these canyons of buildings, it’s very—it’s a good place to make art.”

Artnet  
7 October 2022

# artnet

## People

### 'It Always Comes Back to My Own Embodiment': Watch Artist Rachel Rossin Merge Plexiglas Molds of Her Body With Digital Painting

As part of a collaboration with Art21, hear news-making artists describe their inspirations in their own words.

Artnet News, October 7, 2022



Production still from the Art21 "New York Close Up" film, "Rachel Rossin's Digital Homes." © Art21, Inc. 2021.

SHARE



[Rachel Rossin](#) has made art her entire life, even if she didn't always realize it.

A self-taught computer programmer, Rossin learned to hack games, break them apart, and try to reconstitute them, learning how the "backend" worked from the inside out. Saving images of avatars from the games, Rossin built up an archive that she would mine later to make virtual-reality works. that blend three-dimensional sculptures based on her own body with elements from games like Call of Duty and characters in the style of Japanese manga.

Right now, Rossin's work *THE MAW OF* is on view as part of the [Whitney Museum's "artport" program](#) for new-media art.



Production still from the Art21 “New York Close Up” film, “Rachel Rossin’s Digital Homes.” © Art21, Inc. 2021.

Rossin, who grew up in West Palm Beach and is now based in Brooklyn, recalled her earliest forays into art-making as “a form of escapism.” In an exclusive interview filmed as part of Art21’s New York Close Up series shot in 2021, Rossin explains how her interest in technology-based art grew as the medium itself became more advanced, but always served as a safe haven for her in the midst of an often chaotic upbringing.

To create the work *I’m my loving memory* (2020-21), which blends digital paintings, plexiglas sculptures, and AR, Rossin molds plexiglas from her own shape. She describes them as “hollow body imprints of myself,” which act as shields.

“For myself,” Rossin told Art21, “it always comes back to my own embodiment and how to anchor this very abstract, loose space in the same dimension that I’m in.”

*Exberliner*

12 September 2022

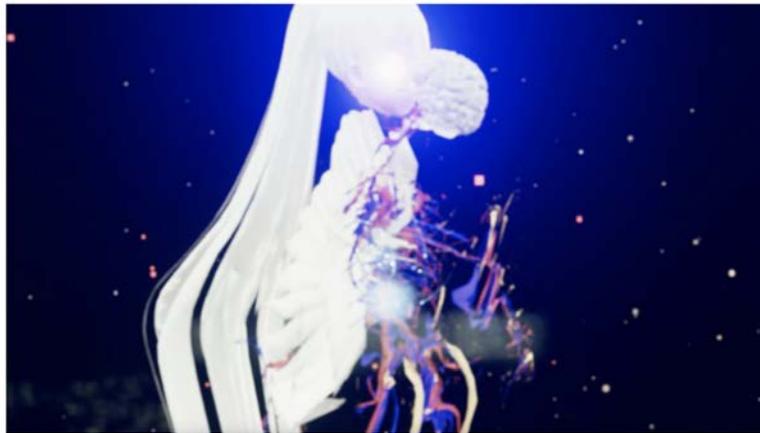
*Berlin in English since 2002*

# EXBERLINER

## Berlin Art Week 2022: What to see, where to see it

Five days of non-stop art. The only drawback is deciding what to see and what to miss out on. Berlin Art Week 2022 is a city-wide collaboration which includes most of Berlin's major institutions, from international museums like the Neue Nationalgalerie to small project spaces like Die Möglichkeit einer Insel.

### **KW on location: Rachel Rossin THE MAW OF**



Rachel Rossin, *THE MAW OF* (2022) © Rachel Rossin

A pioneer of virtual reality, the American artist and self-taught programmer Rachel Rossin combines sculpture, painting and multimedia in a dizzying blend of digital landscapes that will address technology's effect on human psychology. This work will be available online using augmented reality with your phone and offline at the Tieranatomisches Theater where 3D virtual reality environments will have visitors chasing avatars in a rendering of the body's nervous system.

*The Guardian*

11 July 2022

# The Guardian



## From 'Barbies scissoring' to 'contorted emotion': the artists using AI

📷 An image generated by the artist Rachel Rossin using Dall-E 2 and the prompt 'biotech harpy in field at sunset'. Photograph: Rachel Rossin

## 'We are seeing a reflection of ourselves' - Rachel Rossin



📷 An image generated by the artist Rachel Rossin using Dall-E 2 and the prompt 'biotech harpy in field at sunset'. Photograph: Rachel Rossin

I have a background in programming but I'm not an engineer, I'm more of a tinkerer. I've made a lot of my own neural networks over the years - trained on my own datasets of my image-making process - to mimic my drawing style and apply it like a filter over an image. These ranged from maybe 500 drawings to 10,000 images. To train the networks, it takes days, but I have a pretty good computer that I can crunch that data on.

In [Hologram Combines](#), you can see part of that neural network exposed. I usually approach shows by creating my own virtual world of something that exists wholly in virtual reality, and then I clip from that world to make source material. I like to keep my own world self-contained - an internal, metabolic system. Because there's such a saturation of images and media right now, but making my own set from my own visual language and logic is more fun than going out to Google, which is what this is trained on.

That's visual-to-visual search, not text-to-visual, like Dall-E. It's like playing tennis with myself. There's advanced, node-based processes on a neural network that, in the case of Dall-E 2 or mini, there's almost like five sub-neural networks that are happening at the same time - which is pretty incredible. Our AI is of course getting more sophisticated, but it's also getting a little bit more quantum, meaning there are several sub-processes that are happening.



📷 Another image using the prompt 'biotech harpy in field at sunset'. Photograph: Rachel Rossin

I use text in an annotative way - more poetic and abstract than literal. I make something from a feeling, often body-based. It's much more like dream logic than this network, which is very literal. I think it's actually a lot more useful for people who are film directors because it's fun for sketching or storyboarding. But creatively, I don't really need it. It hasn't made its way into one of my projects, formally. And I think it's because I've worked with neural networks for a long time so the novelty has worn off.

[This Person Does Not Exist](#) is much better than Dall-E on faces. I couldn't help but think, "What *does* it think a Rachel Rossin looks like?" I have the same name as the Bladerunner Rachael Rosen, so on Dall-E 2, when I search for my name there's some of that. It's a white Jewish lady with brown hair, which looks pretty similar to me. That's the phenotype, I guess.

The thing that's most remarkable to me is the context or verb, the action-based things. If I searched "the bird is running up the street and lost its toupee", it knows what you want to see. It's going to be interesting when we can start to fold this into making films. Processing is going to get more powerful - it's here to stay.

There's a curatorial aspect that we're ignoring. There's this expectation that we're creating a sort of God, but we have to remember that machine learning, neural networks, artificial intelligence - all of these things are trained on human datasets. There's a trickle-down effect that happens because so much of our perception is folded into the technology, maybe arbitrated by engineers at Google and OpenAI. People are surprised when artificial intelligence is racist or sexist, like somehow forgetting that all of these things are trained on human datasets. It's basically a different type of Google search, that's all that's going on. It's putting trust in the internet.

It's important to remind people what artificial intelligence actually is. We are seeing a reflection of ourselves, and it seems like a magic black box.

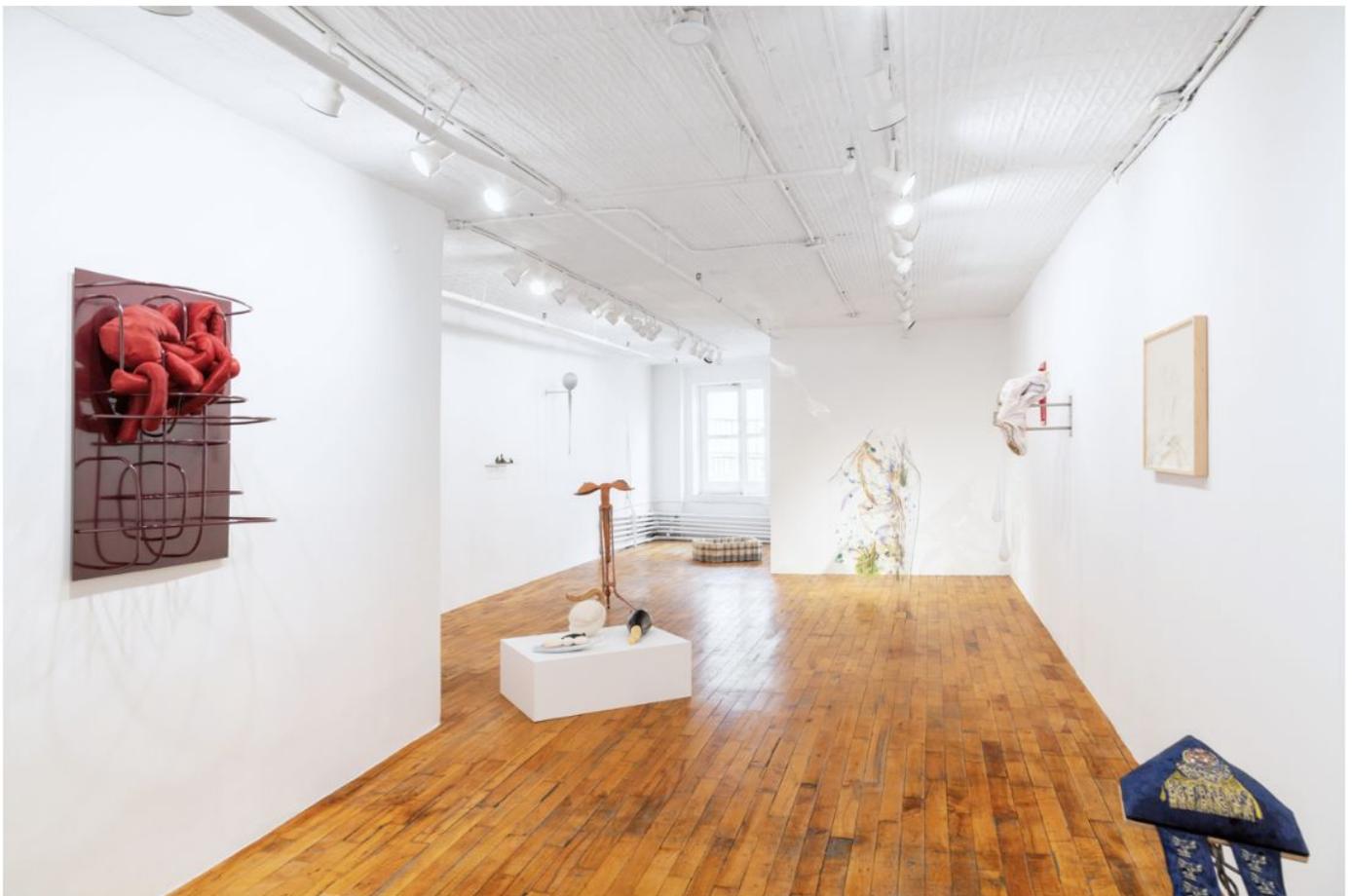
● [Rachel Rossin](#) is a multimedia artist and self-taught programmer.

*WhiteHot Magazine*

3 June 2022



## **SIGNALS at Someday Gallery**



*Installation View. Courtesy Someday, New York. Photography: Daniel Terna.*

*SIGNALS**Someday Gallery*

June 25 through July 29, 2022

By **JONATHAN OROZCO**, August 2022

*SIGNALS*, Someday Gallery's current show running until July 29, is the space's largest and most ambitious exhibition yet. A selection of artists with such diverse practices like fiber arts, cast metal, and assemblage were chosen because of their unified vision of the cyborg. They include, Ivana Bašić, Sula Bermúdez-Silverman, Olivia Erlanger, Brittini Ann Harvey, Madeline Hollander, Umico Niwa, Rachel Rossin, Jennifer Rose Sciarrino, Pauline Shaw, Catherine Telford Keogh, Alison Veit, and Isabel Yellin.

In fact, this is the third version of this exhibition Yellin curated. This iteration was co-curated with her colleagues Jeanette Bisschops and Anaïs Castro.

"The impetus for these projects was my realization during covid lockdown that so many non-binary and female sculptors are having a real conversation materially and conceptually about the mind, the body, and the home, and we are hardly ever in the same room," Yellin says.

"These artists are all contending with notions of otherness, of the internal psychological jungle we are all juggling, as well as the dystopian world we are currently faced with. With this version of the show, the three of us all found hope in these artist's ability to re-imagine what is possible.... The fact the opening coincided with the fall of Roe is just all the more reason to continue to bring the creative community together in new ways."

Here, biology is the subject, and biomorphism is the method. Objects are shaped like robot dogs used to guard international borders, germinating seeds that look like sex toys, or even melting bones. They're also uncomfortable objects, something on the verge of coming to life as a spectator.

The New York Times

3 June 2022

# The New York Times

SCENE CITY

## A Conceptual 'Queer' Club at the Guggenheim

Perfume Genius performed at a benefit for young collectors.

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Jacoby Satterwhite, second from left, at the Guggenheim party. Krista Schlueter for The New York Times



By John Ortved

June 3, 2022

2 MIN READ

New York’s hottest club is Guggenheim. It has everything: trans performers named after cocktails, live puppets, business executives and fashion plates who wear dresses made from human hair and act surprised when asked about their outfit.

On Wednesday, the Guggenheim held a party for its young collectors, and turned its iconic rotunda into a fictionalized “queer arena” and nightclub, conceived by the artists [Jacolby Satterwhite](#) and [Tourmaline](#).

There were certainly elements of a discothèque: lights flashed and [DJ TT Britt](#) played thumping and brash music. But the effect was not entirely convincing. “I don’t know what they were thinking,” said Alison Lopez, a publicist for artists, as she watched guest mingle under the heaving house tracks. “I’m confused.”

Others said it was exactly what they expected. “It’s like in the movies when they do an arty event,” said Michael Alden Hadreas, who performed later that night under the stage name [Perfume Genius](#). “I kept thinking of movies like ‘Look Who’s Talking’, when a baby gets loose at a party.”



Perfume Genius performed. Krista Schlueter for The New York Times



Rachel Rossin. Krista Schlueter for The New York Times



Candice Saint Williams, in a skirt by Miss Claire Sullivan made from human hair. Krista Schlueter for The New York Times

The evening started with an intimate dinner attended by artists like [Rachel Rossin](#), patrons such as Libbie Mugarbi (who wore a silver sequin bikini top), and art world royalty-in-waiting like Ísadóra Bjarkardóttir Barney, the daughter of Björk and Matthew Barney.

By 10 p.m., they were joined at the after-party by hundreds of younger professionals in suits with no ties and little black dresses. A few outfits stood out.

[Candice Saint Williams](#), an artist who gave her age as “I don’t know what time is,” wore a skirt from [Miss Claire Sullivan](#), made from long black human hair. “I love it because I feel like I’m a character; I feel like I’m in Beetlejuice,” she said. “And I have a hairbrush tucked in my underwear.”

ARTnews  
25 March 2022

# ARTnews Est. 1902

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## A Hot Recently Shuttered Downtown Gallery Threw an Opulent Brooklyn Gala for Itself



BY SHANTI ESCALANTE-DE MATTEI  May 27, 2022 5:05pm

[f](#) [t](#) [t](#) [p](#) [+](#)



Alyssa Davis Gala  
SHANTI ESCALANTE/ARTNEWS

Alyssa Davis was a small gallery. So small, in fact, it used to run out of Davis's apartment in the West Village. That is, before a private investigator hired by her building gathered enough evidence to shutter the space for violating zoning laws in April.

Founded in 2016, the gallery was known to those in-the-know, as evidenced by the huge turnout for *Merde!* the Alyssa Davis Gala that was thrown last night in farewell to what once was and in celebration of what it is (hoped) will come.

Simply put, everybody was there. It was like art prom.

Outside, the line for the self-described “**funerary celebration**” snaked around the block, expensive tickets already in hand. Strolling around inside 99 Scott, **an enormous venue in East Williamsburg**, were hundreds of guests that included gallerists, curators, artists, fashion people, nightlife legends, models, dancers, and everyone in between. The party was so large that people weren’t just bumping into pre-pandemic friends, but acquaintances from five, six years ago.

## Related Articles



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**Christina Quarles's Paintings of Tangled Appendages Probe Prismatic Senses of Self**

It’s not surprising the Gala drew such a crowd considering the gamut of events the organizers put together.

Twenty-eight performers sang, danced, and read on the outdoor stage, including an opera singer. A full video program, including works by Rachel Rossin and Karinne Smith played behind a velvet rope. Five portrait artists roamed the party and sat at picnic tables doing live, quick sketches of guests. A red carpet was set up so people could take pictures in their floor-length gowns.

Deep inside the venue, smoke machines and pulsing lights read more nightclub than gala. Musicians Eartheater, Wicca Phase Springs Eternal, and Umfang headlined, preceded and followed by a long list of local musicians.

Cordoned off to the side was a VIP room for guests who had shelled out for a \$250 ticket, or were simply cool enough to get those perks for free. Regular tickets for the event started at \$40.

At the center of the space was a large, tiered structure that held the 64 pieces up for auction, of which 26 sold for yet unknown prices. Included in the auction were New Talents artists **André Magaña and Diana Sofia Lozano**, among many other talented folks. Each of the pieces was photographed in the weeks preceding, in collaboration with No Agency, which arranged to have the photos with represented models. The models took bids at the event until midnight.

Many of the performers and artists involved were there with the support of downtown gallery partners like Lubov, Anonymous, carriage trade, Kings Leap, Entrance, and other others.

An event like this isn’t easy to pull off. “This is incredibly ambitious,” said artist Rossin during the event. But it was made possible, in part, by the many, many artists like Rossin who contributed works or performances without expecting much in return. Not having contact with Davis before, she found herself agreeing to contribute a short video work to the film selection.

“We had so many friends in common, it was easy to say yes,” Rossin said.

What the ticket or auction proceeds would go toward wasn’t clear to any of the artists that *ARTnews* spoke to that night, but the organizers of the event, Alyssa Davis, Genevieve Goffman, and Rachel Rosheger confirmed that they were used to fund the party itself. An art world ouroboros.

Artists seemed happy to contribute, regardless.

“I assumed that the money would go to getting a new space or maybe making this party happening to kind of get the energy or momentum going to get people excited about a new space,” said Zoe Brezsny, cofounder of Gern en Regalia, as well as a poet who was invited to give a reading at the event. Brezsny considers Davis a good friend, and was glad to be involved for whatever purpose.

A few disgruntled guests, who asked not to be named, suggested that the event was somewhat misleading, having assumed that proceeds from the ticket prices and auctions were going to support some artistic cause or the start of a new **Alyssa Davis Gallery**. They thought at least the local performers, and not just the headliners, should get paid.

Davis, Goffman, and Rosheger admit that the structure of the event made things a bit unclear.

“People hear gala and they assume it’s a fundraiser,” said Davis. “Our industry is inherently tied to the financial necessities of donations that come in the form of a gala party.” She pauses, “but it was designed to be a little confusing...”

“The art world is in this place where there’s two ways galleries make money,” said Goffman. “There’s the blue-chip galleries that are for-profit and there are the smaller galleries that often follow a nonprofit model, and if you’re a small gallery people assume it’s a nonprofit project. But there’s a lot of community-run spaces that don’t fit into either model.”

For the organizers, *Merde!* was a chance to experiment with another way of bringing together community, displaying art, and selling it too, as artists in the auction would get 50 percent of the hammer price.

“Ultimately, it was an event we designed for the community,” said Davis. And the community showed up.

*Palm Beach Daily News*  
20 December 2021

## Palm Beach Daily News

LIFESTYLE

# Artist sounds the alarm with hologram-embedded art at County Gallery

**Jane Moore** Special to the Daily News

Published 6:40 a.m. ET Dec. 20, 2021 | Updated 6:41 a.m. ET Dec. 20, 2021

A vibrant dynamic portal where the physical and virtual worlds merge into colorful conceptual artwork opens an exhibit called “Pan-Pan” at County Gallery in Palm Beach.

The immersive show by New York-based artist Rachel Rossin, designed to be viewed as a singular installation, is based on the concept of escapism and draws from the military’s standard radiotelephony call for help, with “pan-pan” being used just prior to “mayday” — and as such, the title is meant as a reflection of the world’s urgent need for help right now.

The conceptual works, three years in the making, comprise Rossin’s first solo show in this area and the first time she is showing her hologram-combines, which use digitally programmed holographic displays embedded in paintings. The works are an expression of Rossin’s desire to blend the tension between the two worlds that we are being asked to exist in every day by connecting worlds that cannot touch one another but that humans are increasingly spending so much time between.



"Pan-Pan," detail, by Rachel Rossin. Meghan McCarthy, MEGHAN McCARTHY/The Palm Beach Daily News

Even though she began the project before the pandemic, the subject matter has become especially relevant with the onset of lockdowns, social restrictions and the need for even more technology to interact with other humans via such new normals as Zoom meetings, virtual school and online fitness classes.

“When I went to do a studio visit in New York this summer, we were initially planning a singular large installation piece,” said County Gallery director Dalton Freed. “But then she showed me one of the small hologram-combines she had created and I was just blown away. I knew these were the works that would create an amazing show here.”



A view of the "Pan-Pan" installation, by Rachel Rossin.  *Meghan McCarthy, MEGHAN McCARTHY/The Palm Beach Daily News*

The colors, lights and abstract beauty of birds and flowers, combined with a soothing color palette are especially well-suited to the idea of Palm Beach as a tropical escape and somewhat different reality than most areas in the country.

Rossin, who was born and raised in West Palm Beach, went to college at Florida State University where she earned a degree in visual art. She has lived in New York since then and was named The New Museum and New Incubator's first-ever virtual reality research fellow in 2015, where they also commissioned a work from her in 2017. The Whitney also just acquired a work for their permanent collection and has commissioned a joint work with The KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin.

Tiffany Zabludowicz, a prominent collector and curator, has been a supporter of Rossin for many years and includes her work in the prestigious Zabludowicz Collection in London. In her exhibition there called "Stalking the Trace," "Rachel Rossin "literally stopped time as movement could and turned the back room of the collection into a mind-blowing projection-mapped digital vortex of new ideas," Zabludowicz said.

"Every conversation with Rachel gives me a brief glimpse into the future, which she sees so clearly," Zabludowicz said. "She has been coding since she was 8 years old and is so digitally native that she sees the parameters and potentials of technology before anybody else, the pitfalls and the attractions, and creates pieces that play with that space. She is a visionary artist."



Artist Rachel Rossin grew up in West Palm Beach. Her show, "Pan-Pan," is on view through Jan. 3 at County Gallery. *Meghan McCarthy, MEGHAN McCARTHY/The Palm Beach Daily News*

Rossin's start as an artist began at a young age in her garage, where her great-grandfather, who had worked for IBM in its early days, left behind many machine parts, computers and typewriters, as well as some of the first commercial matrix printers, after he died. Those matrix printers were what Rossin used for some of her first drawings, painting over the matrix dots on the printer paper and creating machine-based drawings.

“Nobody cared about those old computers and printers and parts, but fortunately my mom kept them and stored them all in the garage. It is very similar to what I do now actually, connecting virtual and physical realities with computers and paints,” Rossin said.

“I was just left to hang out with these machines in the garage, so and I learned how to work them and just tinker. I started working on Command Line [one of the earliest computer programs] when I was 4, so at the same time I was learning verbal language, I was also working in 'code' language, and then I started computer programming when I was 8 years old. It's all very similar to how I work now — taking something machine-based and turning it into something very human.”

Regarding her creative process these days, Rossin describes it as more about the feeling of the work and less about the piece itself, and considers herself more of a concept-based vs. media-based artist.

“Usually I start with the background or the physical painting, and then I start animating on top of that,” she says. “So the process, I think, is very similar to the way our lives work. For example, I'm picking up the phone and I'm in real life, but then going into virtual space to communicate to someone. So it's about tossing the ball between myself in traditional painting and modes like airbrushing, and then working in virtual space with programming, which is what informs the physical space.”

As one of the show's main narratives of escapism, Rossin has created an environment for this show where one can get away from everything, if at least for a few moments.

“Given the year everyone has had,” Freed said, “Rachel wanted to create an environment where you could get away from everything and experience this wonderful, peaceful, soothing universe, so I thought that was perfect. Everyone needs that right now. The show just made a lot of sense to me for this time we are in.”

*The New York Times*

13 May 2021

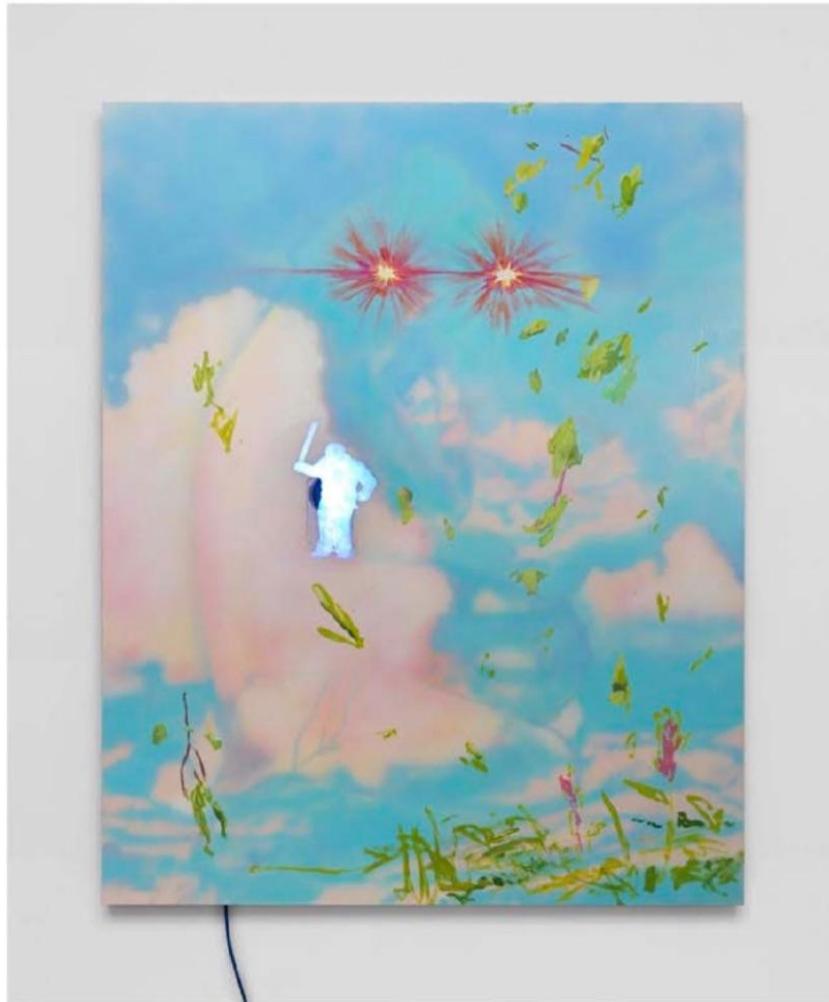
## **The New York Times**

### 4 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Hassan Hajjaj's "My Rockstars"; Hanne Darboven's matrix of digits; Patty Chang's list of fears; and Rachel Rossin's painting-projection blends.

#### **Rachel Rossin**

Through May 22. Magenta Plains, 94 Allen Street, Manhattan; 917-388-2464, [magentaplains.com](http://magentaplains.com).



Rachel Rossin's "Figment of a Fugue State" (2020), oil and airbrushed acrylic on panel with embedded holographic display. Rachel Rossin and Magenta Plains

Rachel Rossin, a self-taught digital tinkerer who began coding at age 8, has made art out of seemingly everything: deepfake videos, canaries trained to sing dubstep, electronics submerged in mineral oil. Her solo show “Boohoo Stamina,” at Magenta Plains, features 17 new paintings made this year and last. Rossin’s media of choice? Oil, acrylic, enamel and the occasional [hologram fan](#). (Think spinning helicopter blades mounted with LED lights.) These items more often serve as flashy digital signage in back-alley electronics shops, but Rossin embeds them into her canvases, where they project digital images just inches away from the paint itself.

In a lesser artist’s hands, these pieces would come off as gimmicks. But Rossin’s take is strangely compelling. At times, her compositions evoke the visionary, spray-painted works of the Romanian-American artist Hedda Sterne, to terrific effect. At other times, Rossin somehow gets her brush marks to replicate the pixelated feel of virtual-reality worlds.

Largely abstract, the paintings nonetheless also feature enigmatic symbols drawn from the digital sphere. The staff of the Greek god Hermes appears in one hologram fan. Hazy, airbrushed catlike figures lurk in several works — paeans to the internet’s most beloved characters. Are memes, avatars and emojis Jungian archetypes, too? Rossin seems to think so. The paintings’ dreamlike qualities work well, as do the unusual ways they both invite and repel touch. Normally, any impulse we might have to run our hands across a painting’s thickly impastoed surface is quickly curbed by the anticipated scorn of a gallery attendant. Here, stray fingers might jam up a hologram fan, obstructing its projected image and earning a disciplinary whack from the fan’s blade. That threat imbues the show with a hum of cool, violent energy, in bracing contrast to the paintings’ balmier scenes. DAWN CHAN

Artnet  
6 May 2021

# artnet

## Art World

### 'It Was Like Making Homes': Watch Artist Rachel Rossin Build Entire Worlds in Her Hybrid Digital Artwork

As part of a collaboration with Art21, hear news-making artists describe their inspirations in their own words.

Caroline Goldstein, May 6, 2021



Production still from the Art21 "New York Close Up" film, "Rachel Rossin's Digital Homes." © Art21, Inc. 2021.

Growing up in West Palm Beach, Florida, artist [Rachel Rossin](#) was often desperate to escape. Since that's not particularly easy when you're a kid, Rossin, like so many others, found escapism through the internet.

As a kid, Rossin taught herself the basics of computer programming, and soon moved on to hacking, losing herself in multiplayer video games like *Call of Duty*. Those early formative experiences set the groundwork for what would become her mature artistic practice blending computer imagery and new technology with analog painting methods.

"The way I was making art before I knew it was art, it was like making homes," Rossin says in a new video as part of [Art21's New York Close Up series](#).

In her pursuit of always "trying to find a home," [Rossin](#) found a sense of safety and care within *Call of Duty*, adopting a male avatar "to sort of live inside." The neutral anonymity of her avatar stood in contrast to the male-dominated gaming culture she was in, acting as a sort of shield from threats of harassment.



Production still from the Art21 "New York Close Up" film, "Rachel Rossin's Digital Homes." © Art21, Inc. 2021.

In the video, which is part of [Art21's](#) participation in the collaborative Feminist Art Coalition Initiative, Rossin is at work in her Brooklyn studio preparing for a group exhibition called "[World on a Wire](#)" that is organized by Rhizome and the Hyundai Motor Company.

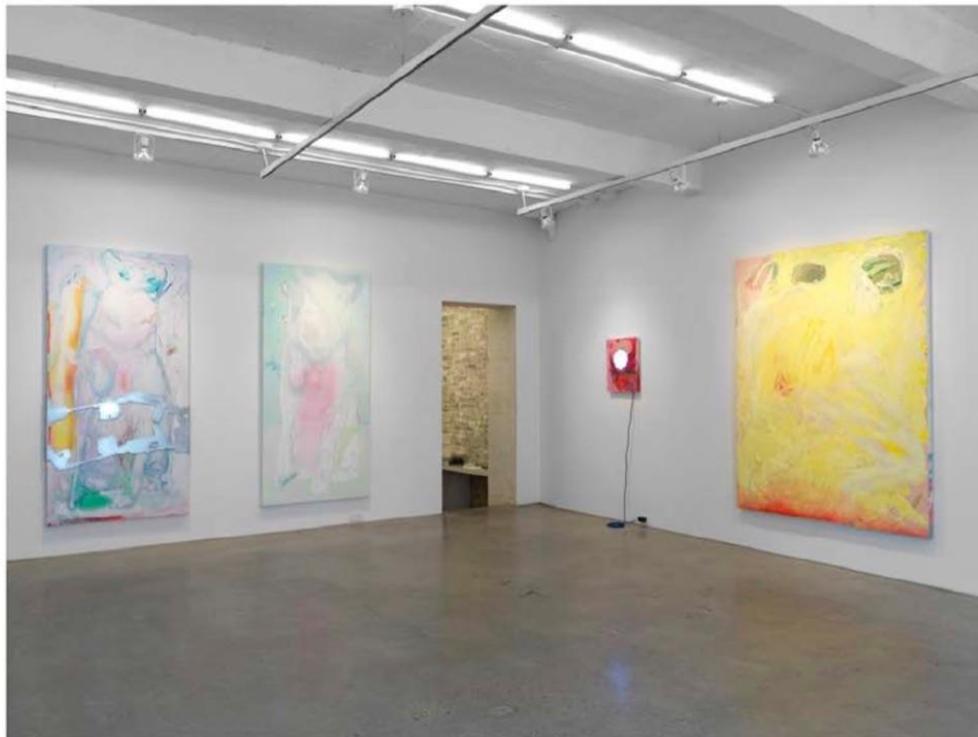
In Rossin's work *I'm my loving memory*, Plexiglas sculptures with virtual imagery printed on them are melted into humanoid figures distorted by color and shadow. The futuristic images represent the dual aspects of Rossin's process, combining virtual iconography with a personal touch.

One of the avatars Rossin keeps to herself is a creature she calls a "harpy," which is half human, half bird. "She speaks to a reality that most people feel," Rossin tells [Art21](#), "which is so much of our emotional and cognitive space lived in virtual spaces, but still... tethered to a mortal coil."

More of Rossin's works are on view at Magenta Plains in the solo exhibition "[Boohoo Stamina](#)" (on view through May 22). The show continues the artist's pursuit to answer questions about how technology and alternate realities can extend, enhance, or limit the nature of being human.

*Whitehot Magazine*

May 2021

**Interview with Rachel Rossin by Brooke Nicholas**

*Installation view, Rachel Rossin, BOOHOO STAMINA, Magenta Plains, New York NY*

Rachel Rossin, BOOHOO STAMINA

Magenta Plains, New York, NY

April 17 to May 22nd

**By BROOKE NICHOLAS May, 2021**

Conducted by Brooke Nicholas on the event of Rossin's solo show at Magenta Plains, BOOHOO STAMINA

Brooke Nicholas: I'd like to start with color. How would you characterize the palette you worked with for this set of paintings?

Rachel Rossin: I often regard color as the hormones of a painting. In this body of work there are a lot of areas of what could be read as soreness or inflammation. Red, glowing edges of things, subsurface scattering... I am consistently attracted to very specific pigments - my consistent companions are pthalo, sevres, alizarin, and vermilion.

BN: BOOHOO STAMINA includes classic paintings alongside the combine paintings you invented, which mix programmed illustrations on spinning electronic fans with an oil-painted canvases. Are you satisfied with this mix of mediums or do you feel you have more experimenting to do?

RR: I'm trying to expand the vocabulary here for a lived experience that's difficult to describe visually. There will always be more experimenting. I'm very excited about the metal combines in this work though, that's brand new.



*Rachel Rossin, Swollen Tulip, Goya Touch, 2021, Oil and oil stick on canvas, 78.25h x 60w in*

BN: When you draft these in-between worlds, are they ideal spaces? What voids do they fill or summon? How do they supplement painting, what I observe as the core of your practice?

RR: Those methods are ways for me to get to areas that are hard to reference which I then can mine as raw data or inspiration for my paintings. My finished Virtual Reality works are different of course because they're inside the medium of VR, not just using tools.

BN: Last time we hung out you were in a post-body kind of mood, how are you feeling these days?

RR: My work has always been tethered in or around states of embodiment. With so much of my social and work life extended even further into virtual spaces I felt more like making a body of work about marking time with lipids.

BN: What is self-repair in the context of this set of works?

RR: That's really what the title of the show is [BOOHOO STAMINA] and why the paintings are built with braces into them.

BN: I admire the consistent visual vocabulary and iconography you have used throughout your practice. Can you elaborate on some of those icons and what they stand for in works included in BOOHOO STAMINA.?

RR: Well there's the caduceus - which is better known as the medical staff with two intertwined snakes. There's the harpy I often use. There's a lot of mech suits and mechanical supports - shapes taken from military exoskeletons that operate as braces for the paintings.

BN: Finally, I wanted to ask you about storage and hoarding – maintaining an archive of 3D digital assets is technically difficult and I'd imagine, an emotional burden as well. What has that process been like? How do you feel when you're bumping around your own archive?

RR: It's pleasant and also uncomfortable. When it's pleasant it gives me that pale blue dot feeling. When it's uncomfortable it's because I'm embarrassed by something - a feeling I love to play chicken with. Some of my most favorite things now are the things that used to cringe the hell out of me. There's a special alchemy in mining humiliating things, I keep them around because I think it's fascinating. I learn a lot by watching how I am reflected back by way of interacting with these objects and how those relationships change over time. **WM**

*Artillery Magazine*

11 May 2021

**artillery**

# OUTSIDE LA: Rachel Rossin

## Magenta Plains, New York

by Annabel Keenan | May 11, 2021



Rachel Rossin, installation view downstairs at Magenta Plains, 2021

While the intersection of art and technology may be new for some, artist Rachel Rossin has been a pioneer in the field for nearly her whole life, having taught herself programming at a young age. Her practice includes painting, sculpture and digital art, as well as hybrid combines that incorporate elements of different disciplines. In her latest exhibition, "Boohoo Stamina" at New York's Magenta Plains, Rossin presents a new body of gestural paintings that explore loss and methods of self-repair.

Pushing the boundaries of traditional and digital art, these recent works seamlessly weave together elements of both the physical and virtual worlds. A clear marrying of the two; some of her paintings include embedded holograms. One such combine, *Boo-hoo (brain)* (2020), features a close-up of a pink face with bright blue tears pouring out of the eyes. Above the eyes is a hologram of a brain that rotates continuously. While the inclination might be to search for a projector or hidden screen, the holograms are installed in the works themselves.



Rachel Rossin,  
"Boo-hoo (brain)," 2020

The figure in *Boo-hoo (brain)* is one of many avatars from the digital realm depicted in both the painted and holographic elements. The pink figure is joined by others from Rossin's digital library, including cats and harpies, perhaps avatars of the artist herself. The allusion to sadness in both the tears and the title of *Boo-hoo (brain)* set the tone for the exhibition.

Addressing the theme of self-repair, Rossin explores the tools we use to heal in both the physical and virtual worlds with images of crutches, braces and the staff of Hermes or Caduceus. In *Tall Cat on Mend* (2021), the artist has painted a cat that appears to be propped up on crutches. The cat, another avatar or a nod to the proliferation of internet cats, is ethereal with its soft, washy colors. Avatars are useful tools to act as proxies for our physical selves, an idea the artist has investigated previously in her practice. Related to the concept of a sentinel species, like the canary in the coal mine sent to detect danger, avatars and our internet-selves are vehicles through which we grow, heal and even test out different identities.



Rachel Rossin, *Set Elements for a Tome To Me* and *Tall Cat on Mend* (installation view), 2021

Next to the cat is another feline figure in *Set Elements for a Tome To Me* (2021). Whereas the tall cat's crutches were painted, Rossin has attached an aluminum brace to the surface of this second painting, introducing another tool to patch the figure together. Slightly robotic, the brace hints at VR equipment and prosthetics, again marrying digital and physical methods of repair.

While the works themselves blur the boundaries of digital and physical, the exhibition as a whole takes this even further. From the flickering images and whirling hum of the holograms to the blue light in the den-like bottom floor of the gallery, there is no beginning or end to Rossin's physical and digital worlds. Instead, she weaves the two together to the point where their defining characteristics no longer exist and the viewer finds themselves surrounded by avatars in a glowing, buzzing, hybrid space.

Rachel Rossin: "Boohoo Stamina"

[Magenta Plains](#)

New York, NY

Runs thru May 22

*Cultbytes*

8 May 2021

# Cultbytes

Interviews

## Rachel Rossin's Virtual World: How the Invisible Infrastructure of Technology Helps to Parse Reality

Annabel Keenan  
May 8, 2021



Rachel Rossin. Image courtesy of the artist.

**R**achel Rossin is a New York-based multimedia artist, virtual reality savant, and self-taught programmer whose works blend the boundaries between the physical and the digital. In her current solo show at Magenta Plains, Rossin presents a body of new gestural paintings that are at once captivating, yet disorienting, subtly weaving together digital and traditional art-making methods. Titled "Boohoo Stamina," the exhibition addresses themes of loss and healing, and explores how the invisible infrastructures of technology and the internet have come to define how we've experienced life—the good and the bad—over the last year.

Speaking with Cultbytes, Rossin gave us a close look into her practice, including how she first became involved with virtual reality, the ways in which technology can be both therapeutic and escapist, and her view on the current makeup of the NFT market.

**Annabel Keenan:** *Your current exhibition at Magenta Plains is a great showcase of your work, as well as a more personal look into loss and self-repair. Before diving into the show, can you explain how you became involved with VR and programming?*

**Rachel Rossin:** It really started with my great grandfather, who was a mechanic for Burroughs Adding Machine and then IBM and was a really intuitive person when it came to hardware and technology. He left a lot of these old machines when he passed. They were really just old parts and, as a child, I got into putting them together and breaking them apart, which built my understanding of computing and hardware.

**AK:** *How did the art side of things evolve?*

**RR:** It evolved more specifically out of the only machine that he left that actually functioned – a dot matrix printer that was command line, which is just text on the screen without a virtual space. Those are my first memories of how art became involved by making these drawings with the dot matrix printer. I have an [Art21 documentary](#) that came out on May 5th and I talk about this a lot because my mom actually found these first drawings that I made – and the date on them would mean I was six. It's crazy to think that I was using command line at age six, but I was just doing what children do – playing and accidentally breaking things.

It gave me the advantage in terms of access to understanding early computers and programming. When Windows 95 came out, which was the first graphic user interface for an operating system that I was introduced to, I knew exactly what was behind there and I was able to then see code as something completely familiar. It felt very native and very much like home to me.

**AK:** *What made you want to actually create virtual art and virtual spaces? Understanding the technology is one thing, but your dedication to the craft has spanned nearly 30 years.*

**RR:** For me it has to do with escapism, which in a lot of ways can be a form of therapy. I think this is the same for other people as well. Of course, this can also be very unhealthy, but it can also be a necessary way to parse reality or to cope with reality where you need a break. I grew up in South Florida in a pretty frenetic environment with a lot of siblings and my parents were stretched thin financially, which led to pretty consistent uncertainty. This really contributed to my wanting to make art as virtual spaces that were proxies for home.



Installation view of "Rachel Rossin: Boohoo Stamina" at Magenta Plains, New York, 2021.

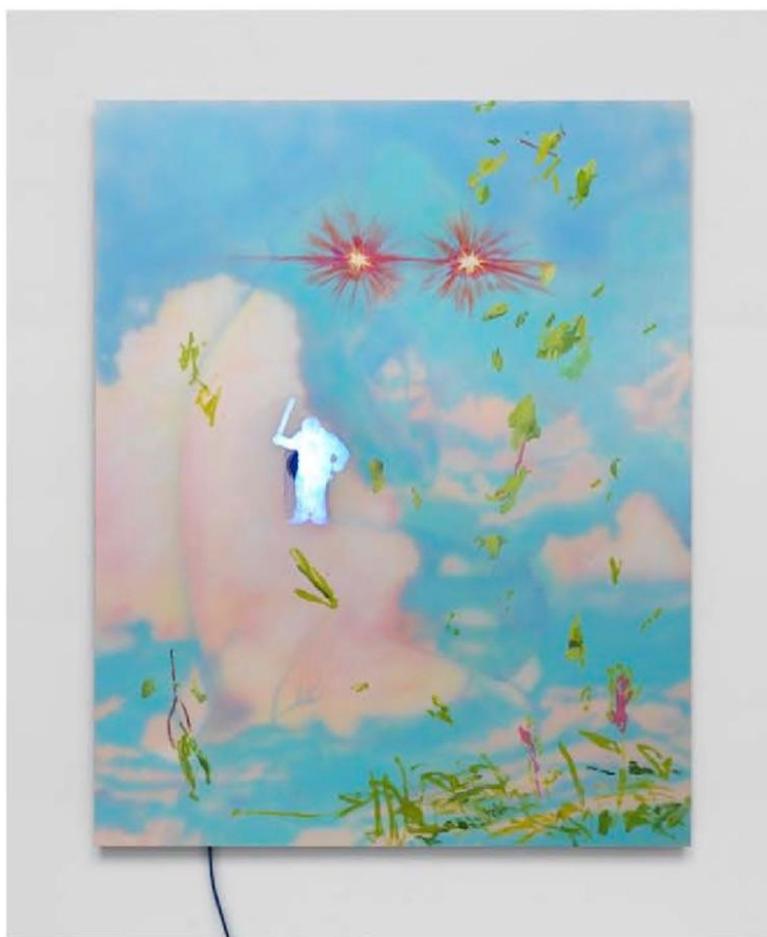
**AK:** *This brings me to my next question about the works in "Boohoo Stamina." This idea of loss, healing, and self-repair is evident in the exhibition title, and it really comes through in the works themselves with imagery, like the Caduceus, crutches, crying eyes, and the aluminum braces. There's definitely a sense of the show as a kind of proxy and a venue through which you can heal. How did this show come to fruition?*

**RR:** Thank you for that question and for really looking into the content of the works. It's one of my more vulnerable shows. It might not seem like that on the surface, but when you really get into the material, you see the repeated imagery of the harpies, which is an avatar I frequently use, as well as the Caduceus, which I've been using for about a year. I like the Caduceus because it's so ubiquitous and has persisted for as long as through human history, which makes me feel small. I love it as a symbol that has hung around and more or less stayed the same visually, but how did we get here? It's so archaic and it's been passed down across cultures and reached beyond language.

There's this imagery related to loss and healing, and, as you mentioned, the title "Boohoo Stamina," of course points to that as well. This past year has been difficult for everyone with all that we've been through, and I've lost five people that were very close to me. At our core, we're all going through things and working on processing these bigger human feelings. It's been interesting to see the role that technology has played. That's the question that the show is posing: what is this invisible infrastructure that's put this grid on top of all of us and how has it served us in times of tragedy when we've been so isolated? I'm interested in the way that I lean on technology now and the way that I leaned on it when I was younger. Now there's this fatigue that really came over the last year, which is why I decided to make the larger paintings in the show, which are symbolically me leaning into the body and leaning into the language of painting using expressionistic marks – marks that really hold time. There's something interesting to me in how expressionistic paintings hold time, you can see where the artist stood, how they held the brush, which contrasts heavily with the language of technology. There's a sterility and stiffness to technology, even if there are time-based elements.

**AK:** *This exploration of the digital and the physical spans across your practice. You often incorporate elements of your digital creations in your physical works, and in turn your digital art takes cues from the physical forms. Can you explain what's involved with this process?*

**RR:** It's funny, I really can't tell you how this happens. I can track some things when I look back on them, like the Caduceus started as drawings and they turned into a sculpture that I made in a VR application. A lot of the VR space that the paintings are based off of are spaces I make on reflections about embodiment, but they're made when I can't see my own body. There's this real sense of déjà vu of how the body feels. From there it can become a simple, playful, mindscape where things just come up. I use this VR space the same way that I use my sketchbook, but the difference is that in a virtual space, I'm able to move around more freely. I used to lucid dream frequently in high school and it's very similar to that where you're able to move the light around and control things and sketch in a way without this flatlander approach. In contrast, when I am making actual VR works I approach those as project-based. My virtual reality works are self-contained ideas. There's not a lot of chance that can be blown into them. They're executed in much more of a game-developer approach, which is pretty straightforward.



Rachel Rossin, "Figment of a Fugue State," 2020, oil and airbrushed acrylic on panel with embedded holographic display. Courtesy of the artist and Magenta Plains, New York.

**AK:** *A few of the works in "Boohoo Stamina" embody a close weaving of the digital and the physical with holograms embedded in the actual surface of the paintings. The exhibition is somewhat disorienting in that sense, where the visitor struggles to understand where the physical ends and the digital begins. When did you start experimenting with holograms in your work?*

**RR:** Around 2018, but what's really interesting is that it's essentially an old technology, a zoetrope with LED. I spoke recently with Zachary Kaplan from Rhizome and Scott Fisher, who was at the forefront of inventing VR, and we were talking about his fascination with stereoscopic images and how a lot of these technologies have existed for so long, but you just wait until you need to use them. It's almost like persistent amnesia. In a way technology is so frail, but it's also very familiar and always around even if you're not using it, much like the image of the Caduceus. There's this sense that we need things to be novel for them to be relevant when they are just essentially tools that we already have. I like exploring that.



Installation view of "Rachel Rossin: Boohoo Stamina" at Magenta Plains, New York, 2021.

**AK:** *The holograms contribute to the blurring of the physical and digital spaces of the gallery itself. They add an unexpected layer with the flickering images and constant whirling noise. Then, when you go downstairs, the whole lower level is cast in a blue light that completely transforms the viewer, as if they're one of your avatars in your virtual world.*

**RR:** Absolutely, I'm so glad you got that. I really wanted it to work. I was worried that putting the gels on the lights would cast blue on the paintings, so we had to be careful about finding the right type of spotlights that could cut through the blue to still properly light the works. That was a bit of a quest that I thought was really worth it, even though it's so subtle. I wanted it to feel like you were a part of this virtual, foggy blue space.

The first time I went down to the lower floor of the gallery to see if the blue light would work, I felt instantly small, like I was in some sort of simulated environment. And I was like, yes, yes, yes, yes. This smallness, and even sadness, that comes through is associated with virtual spaces in general when you're separated from people, which we all are now in real life. That's really how I'm feeling right now, because of how much my social interactions and relationships have had to lean on virtual spaces. I felt that it's necessary to express this, as well as our perseverance and stamina.



Rachel Rossin, "Boohoo (brain)," 2020, oil, airbrushed acrylic, and graphite on panel with embedded holographic display. Courtesy of the artist and Magenta Plains, New York.

**AK:** *In your previous works, you've explored the concept of the sentinel species, like the canary sent into the coal mine to detect danger before people enter. The avatars in your works at Magenta Plains take this idea even further. Can you talk about how "Boohoo Stamina" relates to your earlier explorations of this idea?*

**RR:** Oh, I'd love to. "Boohoo Stamina" is sort of the sequel to a show that I had in September at 14A, my gallery in Hamburg, that was called "[The Sentinel \(tears, tears\)](#)", where I actually trained a canary to sing dubstep. I had been learning about the finch family of birds and the way their neurology works from a whitepaper on birdsong and electronic music. Essentially, when they are learning a new song, usually when they are still young, there's a pattern rhythm that makes them take to EDM and dubstep quickly, as the beats per minute is similar to birdsong. I've been training finches with electronic music for years. As we were leading up to the pandemic I kept hearing people talk about sentinel species and the canary in the coalmine, and I decided to make a video of me training the bird titled "The Sentinel" to accompany the show. The whole idea feels to me like two parts, the first with the canary project and then this second part with avatars as these sentinel beings.

My most recent NFT relates to this work and [you can see the canary that I trained](#) is scoring this larger virtual reality simulation, but the longer video of me training the bird is 20 minutes and really works better in a gallery setting.

**AK:** *Speaking of NFTs, you've always been working with digital art and in this hybrid space of digital meets physical, but, for a lot of people, this is a new topic. As we've all seen, the NFT market has gone wild over the last few months with an increase in minting and buying from seasoned digital artists, young artists, as well as speculators. How do you feel about this increase in mainstream NFT popularity?*

**RR:** I think technology is here to stay, but this is an interesting time. Unfortunately there are a lot of similarities to an MLM (multi level marketing) or Ponzi scheme kind of thing going on where you do see some younger artists that don't have a market trying to enter the space and not do well. The people who are doing the best in NFTs already have big art markets or are famous or have some sort of footprint like a lot of followers. I think about my friend Rafaël Rozendaal, who has been making digital art for some 15 years and is doing extremely well with NFTs. For someone like Rafael who has been putting in the work over years and years as a completely dedicated artist and has finally been able to make money from this new popularity, that's amazing and completely deserved. This is his medium and this is what he cares about. But then you have people without any established market coming in and spending like \$300 on gas fees, depending on how Ethereum fluctuates, and they're hoping that they'll make that money back.

It reminds me of those art competitions in the backs of magazines where if you send in your drawing of the dog copied perfectly, they would give you some sort of elaborate prize. You'd have to pay five dollars or something and hope to win. A total Ponzi scheme. That's the unfortunate part of people jumping into NFTs remind me of and that makes me worried for them.

Artnet

6 May 2021

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## Art World

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Caroline Goldstein, May 6, 2021



Production still from the Art21 "New York Close Up" film, "Rachel Rossin's Digital Homes." © Art21, Inc. 2021.

## SHARE



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As a kid, Rossin taught herself the basics of computer programming, and soon moved on to hacking, losing herself in multiplayer video games like *Call of Duty*. Those early formative experiences set the groundwork for what would become her mature artistic practice blending computer imagery and new technology with analog painting methods.



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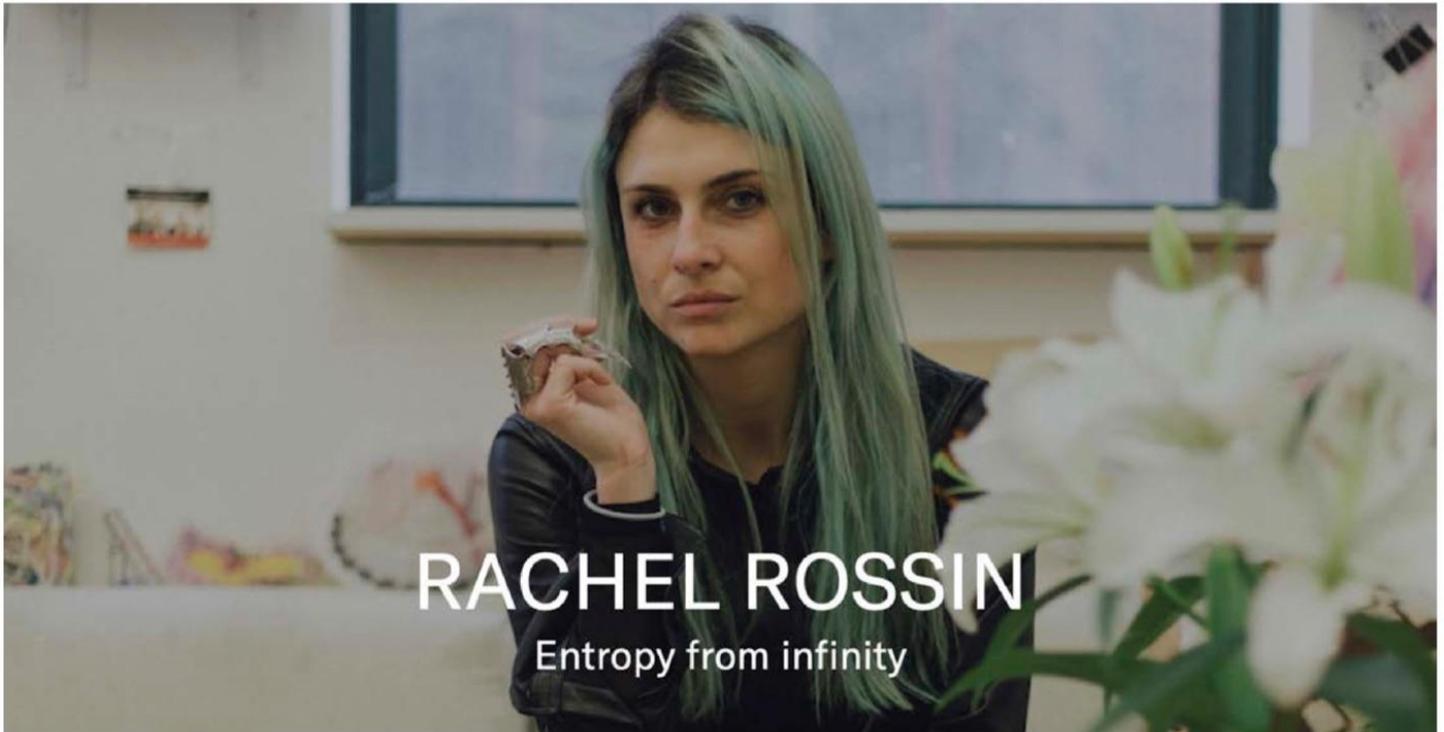
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*Killscreen*

18 February 2021

# KILLSCREEN



**RACHEL ROSSIN**  
Entropy from infinity

February 18, 2021 / Interview by Alex Westfall | Photography by David Evan McDowell



**H**ow do we account for the tension between technology's infinite, unrestricted promise and the impermanence of being human? Rachel Rossin interrogates this slippage. Floating between painting, VR worlds, holograms, and more, the Brooklyn-based artist carries with her the essence of what it means to be alive. Rossin's work meditates on and pushes the boundaries of human perception, the tenderness, and the vulnerability of empirical experience. Here, she speaks with us on her childhood underwater, the illusory nature of immersive technology, and the need to return to entropy.

Rachel's new project, *I'm my loving memory*, is in Rhizome's traveling show, [World on a Wire](#).

*Was there something about growing up in Florida that drew you to virtual worlds?*

Many young people are attracted to technology in the first place because there's usually something to escape from. My community and my home environment were both really intense environments. To cope with that, my young mind went towards spaces that felt safer. There was a very therapeutic necessity.

Also, I grew up so close to the ocean and spent a lot of time underwater. It just felt so similar in a way. There's this thing that was just out of reach beyond this surface. The surface tension of the water felt very similar to the surface tension of the virtual screen. When we first had dial-up internet, I moved into coding and doing small visual experiments online. That's probably why it felt so native.

My great-grandfather worked as a typewriter mechanic, and then that he was at the Burroughs Adding Machine company. He was a high school dropout—a mechanic when that turned into IBM. He was given a bunch of IBM computers that were then just left in our garage once he died. Those were things that I could tinker with—basically garbage. Especially in the 90s, people didn't know what to do with something like that. That's how I started building hardware.

The first experiments were small drawings with the dot matrix printer. I was making shapes on the computer and then printing them out and making drawings. I was also breaking things, doing ASCII art, which I didn't know at the time. Trying to open the operating system, then I'd have to figure out how to fix it, or I'd get in a lot of trouble. I was fascinated with the world that came with the Windows 95... those maze or pipe screensavers. I was trying to figure out how to make simulated environments.

*What was the BFA program like at Florida state? Were there particular professors or classes that helped shaped your practice?*

It's a football school, so the teachers are doing their best—my Professor [Owen Mundy](#) showed me Ryan Trecartin's and Jordan Wolfson's work. I started to understand that there was a dialogue that was happening with artists that were alive. Before that, I thought that Leonardo da Vinci was the same as Bruce Nauman. For me, there was more access to spaces like DeviantArt or manga.

Luckily, I was encouraged to do experiments, but the program was very separate in the practices. I was secretly making AR experiments with image-based recognition. I would show the painting an image, and it would recognize itself. Those were my first early hybrid works.

You cite Hannah Arendt and Robert Smithson as influences. What draws you to those thinkers?

I think a lot about Gretchen Bender's and Susan Sontag's writing. Robert Smithson's ideas go beyond the novelty of the medium. That's the essence of all writers that I'm attracted to working in the language of what it means to be human.

I don't work in the language of technology. When you think about it, technology is the promise of being able to live forever, ideas of utopia. Whereas being human is very much rooted in loss...which, in shorthand for Smithson, is entropy. It's the tender, vulnerable, and fleshy experience is of being alive. I'm looking for something that's essential to our lived experience—what it's like to have a body, what it's like to lose people that you love, what it's like to be a part of the messiness and contradictions of that. It goes beyond the medium. That's why those people are compasses.

*When you were starting out working with these ideas, were there biases in the technology that you had to get around?*

I look at where the most resistance is and try to press on that. I think about the piece *Man Mask*, which was this piece where I led a body awareness meditation from inside an avatar I hacked from *Call of Duty*. With Lauren Cornell, who curated that series, I was talking about this experience of pretending to be male because it was just easier to hide in plain sight instead of being harassed. Looking back on those experiences, I was thinking, where are the pressure points or the points of pain, where's the knot in the muscle?

With virtual reality, when I made *Ghost Hand*, I felt like there wasn't enough. People were putting on these bubbles on their heads, and they weren't able to express their embodiment—they're on these rides. So to combat that, I was having the user scrape part of the piece away as they burrowed through it.

With all technologies and media in general, the most interesting thing for the medium usually is the thing it's most suited for. The question that I had was, why was I using virtual reality? If I was just using it as a novelty or trick, there was no point if I was just going to be making something that could be a film. They wanted 360 videos for the virtual reality piece because of the app's constraints and the amount of money they had. They couldn't really host interactive things.

The reason a lot of new media work never touches people is that they get seduced by the novelty or the newness of something without expressing anything that comes from its core.

*For projects where you have both a digital and a physical component, are there challenges in the translation that you come up against? Do you think about moving between these two spaces as translation?*

Form follows function. So much of the way that I'm working or making the reference images for the paintings or just any of that is in a virtual space.

It's the same way that you'd make a maquette. I'm using a lot of 3D software already. It's quite easy for that to be the kombucha starter for what the other parts of the piece will be. It's the most effective way to communicate on that level is to show the different facets of the practice. It's pretty natural.

For *Stalking the Trace*, the presentation at the Zabłudowicz Collection, I wanted the video piece on the outside and the structure of the installation to feel like the lobby or the waiting room or the opening to the VR work. That was a challenge because there's no way to elegantly program interactive things in the physical space. To solve that, I used the zoetrope format, so that when you walked around physically in that area, there would be the illusion of a before or after image or walking through what felt like an animation device. It was an optical illusion—a sleight of the hand.

That worked nicely for me because it's talking about the body—the inherent frailty and how easy it is to fool ourselves into believing that all we need is an accelerometer in this virtual world. VR is very different from what it is to be in reality. We all know that because of how uncomfortable it is to have a headset on.

That was a nice way of talking about the guts of the piece; the sleight-of-hand of what a lot of visual-based technologies are doing to us.



*Is there a binary between observation and embodiment that you're trying to collapse?*

When I'm starting paintings, I do an exercise called recursive live drawing. You sit with your body in virtual reality. If I'm stuck on a problem, what I'll do is I try to draw or represent the body the way it, the way it feels instead of the way it looks. I can feel when I do a scan really fast. It's like, For some reason, the backs of my lungs are more prominent than the rest of the body, so it's like drawing. And how do I express that? This very internal space that's really based on recursion or using the language of technology to understand something further.

*Your process involves the physical act of painting or the corporeal experience of existing in a virtual environment. Could you talk more about the body and corporeal movements as important to you?*

Time moves differently in the virtual world. I love programming, the puzzles in making something interactive. Most of the interactive pieces that I make always have the user or the viewer as the arbiter. So in *The Sky is a Gap*, the viewpoint and the physical position of the user drove the piece. It was tracking the viewer's gaze and progress to move time forwards and backward, for instance. The viewer's gaze acts as this entropy laser eating away parts of the piece. You would leave the piece with a different experience—there's this element of the interactive work, this intrinsic human quality, of what it is to move through space.

When it comes to the painting, it teeters into a seesaw where the work influences itself or each respective aspect. It literally becomes, what is painting? It's marking my own time and my perspective. When you learn how to read a painting, you can see where the painter is standing. You can see the way that they're moving through time, based on the style they have, but then it becomes very literally about embodiment.

When I'm working in those spaces, the arbiter is myself instead of the viewer. The hologram combines become these annotations or windows in an even more literal way, like filters layered on top of the paintings. The holograms combine what's happening in a lot of my interactive works as tone poems. That's exactly what the works are about—the relationship between the perception of this fleshy, vulnerable thing, and then this idea of infinity, which is totally a farce.

Rhizome

26 June 2019

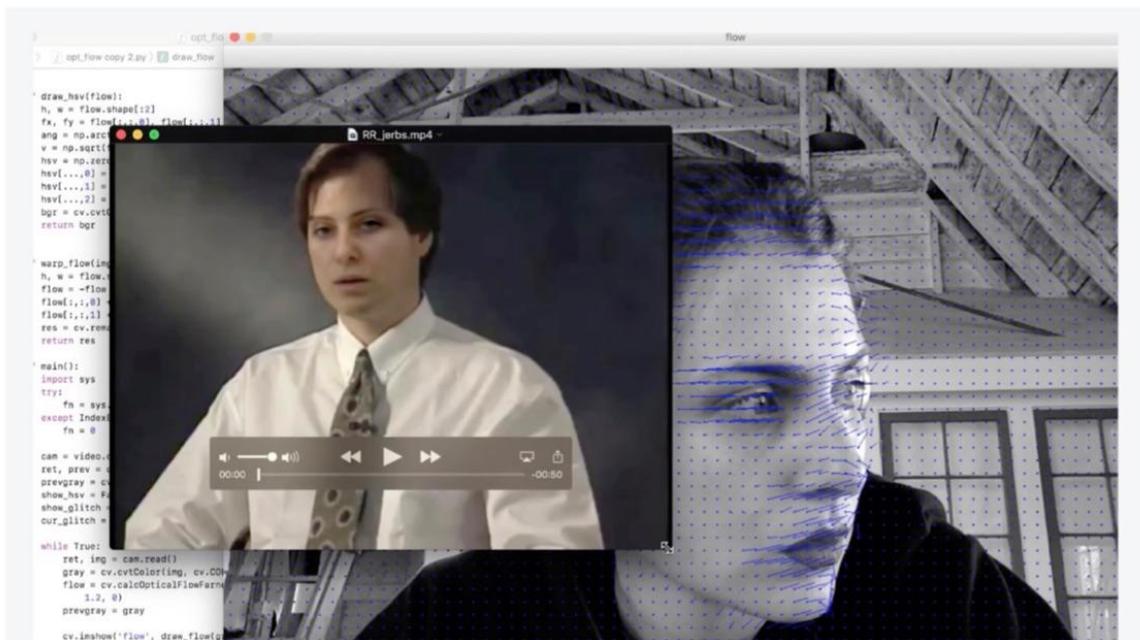
## RHIZOME

## Glitches in the Simulation

The Phillips x Daata artist commissions

By [Michael Connor](#)

Jun 26, 2019



Rachel Rossin, *Recursive Truth*, 2019. Still frame from digital video.

In Jeremy Couillard's *HOTR Home Furnishing*, an IKEA-like warehouse store serves as a re-education camp for billionaires following the Earth's salvation at the hands of aliens. As a necessary condition of the transition to a more equitable and climate-friendly society, the aliens are attempting to retrain the billionaires of the old world to perform humble and useful tasks—specifically, to assemble prefab furniture.

This work, along with Rachel Rossin's *Recursive Truth*, was commissioned as part of a partnership between [Phillips auction house](#) and [Daata Editions](#), an initiative that aims to cultivate a market for born-digital art. Exhibited at Phillips's galleries in New York in April and June respectively, both works probed the possibilities and limits of worldbuilding and simulation as political gesture.

Rossin's *Recursive Truth* puts particular focus on worldbuilding as a material practice. The work feels at once like a collaged composition and a documentary glimpse into the artist's practice, a glimpse of the labor involved in working with digital materials. As Rossin records her computer's desktop, she opens a series of windows, creating a dense and layered composition of code, video clips, music tracks, and image processing.

Rossin herself appears on a webcam, a studio-like environment in the background; lines of code emerge on a text editor in an adjacent window. Room tone and the sound of typing can be heard. The computer is processing Rossin's image, attempting to track the displacement of pixels from one frame to the next using a machine vision technique known as [optical flow](#). This gives way to a clip of a forest on a windy day, where a similar visualization is performed—but in this case, the computer seems to struggle to reduce the motion in such a complex scene to a manageable schematic. This processed imagery soon gives way to examples of scenes that are syntheses generated by these kinds of analytical processes: deep fake videos, in which a machine learning system is used to superimpose live video of a person's face, and clips from CGI fantasy realms which call to mind Fortnite, a massively successful online videogame which commands the money and attention of vast communities of players.

"Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" begins to play: "*They used to tell me I was building a dream/ with peace and glory ahead.*" Suddenly, Billie Eilish interrupts Bing Crosby: "*I wanna end me*"—alluring death drive replacing wistful regret. A convertible crashes, its motion carefully measured by the optical flow visualization; a rendered scene seems to melt, disaster is upon us. At this point, Rossin's face appears superimposed on Steve Jobs' in a clip taken from an interview conducted during his NeXT Computer days, every bit the surly and misunderstood genius.

The references in Rossin's video sit in dynamic tension with one another, revolving around the social realities surrounding synthetic worlds: the labor that goes into them, the underlying mathematical processes, the legislation, the founding of tech empires, their potential impact on viewers, and the artist's role within that. Ultimately, the quotidian feel of the clips and the melancholic musical choices contrast with the supposedly transformative power of the tools portrayed. "Technology is just a reflection of ourselves," Rossin asserts in [a video interview accompanying the commission](#), and in her video simulation is less a way of visualizing a radical break from our existing reality, an opportunity to reinvent and disrupt, than an exploration of the very relationships that govern it.

The works by Rossin and Couillard from the Phillips and Daata Editions collaboration represent variations on the philosophically rich question of the relationship between world and worldbuilding. For Couillard, rapid prototyping of alternate utopian realities becomes a way to isolate dystopian aspects of the present. For Rossin, worldbuilding is a way of engaging directly and materially with the dense technocratic systems that structure much of our reality. (*"They used to tell me I was building a dream..."*) Both of their positions have a great deal to teach us about our current reality, in which simulation plays an important role.

Faced with news cycles that seem increasingly apocalyptic and unbelievable, social media users have frequently made reference of late to the simulation hypothesis—the idea that our lives are actually playing out inside an artificial simulation by some incomprehensibly powerful supercomputer: *"There's a glitch in the simulation."* It's a kind of ironic humor, intended to signal how powerless we all are in the face of this technocratic system—and in this respect, it's also a kind of fantasy: those without power have no responsibility to act. Couillard and Rossin might concede that in some ways we do live in simulation, but their work reveals the simulation as real, material, having political import. That's no dream you're building; it's our world.

Frieze

26 April 2019

# FRIEZE

## Possibilities of Creation

Daniel Birnbaum, curator of the first Frieze VR exhibition, *Electric*, speaks to artist Rachel Rossin about VR's past, present and future

D

BY DANIEL BIRNBAUM IN FRIEZE WEEK MAGAZINE | 26 APR 19



**Daniel Birnbaum** You work in installation, painting and virtual reality. Do your physical works anticipate what you realize in VR?

**Rachel Rossin** Sometimes a discovery in painting ends up being something that can lead into a virtual reality piece. My understanding of spaces completely changed once I started making paintings from virtual reality. I look now at the Hudson River Valley painters and there's almost this... it's not a smell, but you know that quality in those paintings? An openness, an uncanniness, a sense of the screen...

**DB** I believe certain artists have anticipated the capacity of VR before it was even a concept. Marcel Duchamp included mathematical dimensions in his work, invisibly. We've spoken about Hilma af Klint, who thought she was painting things that cannot be seen, and translating her works in VR. Is that something you would actually want to do?

**RR** Because I love and appreciate her work so much, it's very easy to want to do that. I've been talking about how painters capture space. Af Klint is thinking about this too. The shallowness of those paintings. There's something that feels like it's working from the wake of a movement through space or something: a sort of recursiveness.

**DB** She had this utopian idea of building a spiral structure for displaying her work, that she refers to as a temple. With VR, one could actually help her finally realize it.

**RR** It's very straightforward. She already left us directions: it's just executing something in technology that she didn't have access to.

**DB** I think once or twice in every century there's an innovation that changes the possibilities of creation, and there's a little window of opportunity before we define how it's used or not used. Do you think we're at the beginning or the end of that window for VR?

**RR** Very much at the beginning. There's still so much more ground to explore. Right now we're dependent on rendering. On the technical side, things are moving very fast. Our methods are all going to shift very quickly, and the electronics themselves too.

**DB** You are perhaps unusual because you're an artist but also a programmer and coder. You have basically created these works in this high-tech medium yourself. Are you self-taught?

**RR** Yes. But I think all programmers are self-taught. And you continue to be self-taught because it's always changing. The first things that I was making were really small applications: video games, but also non-games, like a sandbox or some sort of experimental world. Virtual reality for me is the intersection of programming games and installation art.

**DB** There's a tradition in contemporary art of creating immersive environments in vast spaces like Tate Modern's Turbine Hall in London. Do you think the spread of VR will make achieving this kind of effect too easy?

**RR** I don't know if there's such a thing as 'too easy', because then that just starts to move what the threshold is. It is becoming very easy to make things look really lovely in VR. The harder things are the ideas, of course.

**DB** What can you say about the piece you'll show in 'Electric'?

**RR** In *Man Mask* (2016), I'm performing a body-awareness meditation from inside of a *Call of Duty* character. It's my voice speaking, but you're inside this exploded video game world, where I've hacked all of the assets. It's actually the only passive 360 piece I've made.

**DB** On one level, one could say the medium is only fully explored when it involves all kinds of interactivity. But then, we couldn't show it to thousands of people, which is the plan here.

**RR** I think this is a good plan.

**DB** I've often seen VR being presented in art contexts in a marginal slightly sad way. Do you think VR will disrupt traditional ideas on where art is shown, and how it can reach audiences?

**RR** In Paul Valéry's 'The Conquest of Ubiquity' (1928), he talks about being able to recreate an orchestra as if you're sitting in front of it. That is a very large appeal for live virtual reality as a medium for experiential art. But there are more radical possibilities. I've been doing a lot of experiments with VR chat, and there's so much empathy in the way people are communicating with each other. Those types of interactions will change access to art, yes.

**DB** There is sometimes a critical impulse attached to VR, that it's somehow solipsistic; I always say that reading a novel is also something you do alone. Do you think it's just a misunderstanding that VR is somehow a lonesome medium?

**RR** I think right now it can be. In VR chat, you can tell the people who are just looking at it and aren't very engaged, and those people are not just engaged, but even take on added qualities: someone who's appearing as Kermit starts to act like Kermit. So it is social. Also, and maybe this is a little too grandiose, but I know that there are major companies having VR conferences so that people don't have to fly across the world. Think about the environmental impact of that...

**DB** I've been thinking about that too, being one of the worst when it comes to going everywhere for biennials etc. In the future, maybe there can be another kind of international dialogue through this omnipresent medium. The art world as I know it will always want moments of commonality where we meet and gather and have real exchanges. Speaking of exchanges, who are the people in this field who push you in some direction or inspire you?

**RR** Gretchen Bender is amazing. The amount of presence she brings to her work. She has an awareness of this terrain's potential for 'evil', and puts that into a place that is hopeful and not didactic. You were talking, earlier, about the Duchamp... what piece specifically?

**DB** It's to do with the Large Glass (1915–23). Actually, there's a group in Frankfurt who've turned the work into machinery, so it comes alive. Even people who spent decades thinking about the Large Glass understood it anew when they saw this version.

So if artists anticipate the possibilities of technology, technological developments also sometimes show us new sides of art we think we already know.

*The New York Times*

1 May 2019

## The New York Times

FRIEZE WEEK 2019

### Want to Check Out Frieze? All You Need Is an App and a Headset

The art fair introduces virtual reality so the curious can view some works from afar.

By Sophie Haigney

May 1, 2019

#### 'Man Mask' by Rachel Rossin



[Rachel Rossin](#) has long been thought of as a wunderkind of virtual reality-based art. Unlike many artists in the field, Ms. Rossin is a self-taught coder who works directly with the technology. Her work “Man Mask,” which was previously shown at the New Museum, draws from the worlds of gaming and guided meditation. She takes landscapes from “Call of Duty,” a military video-game franchise, but reframes them, as a woman’s voice drones dreamy mantras in the background: “Peace and cheerfulness are now becoming my normal state of mind.” The soldiers take on trippy, spirit-like qualities and the world becomes washed-out and strange.

Mr. Birnbaum said: “She has taken the violence away from the game and created a dream world.”

*Hyperallergic*

6 January 2018

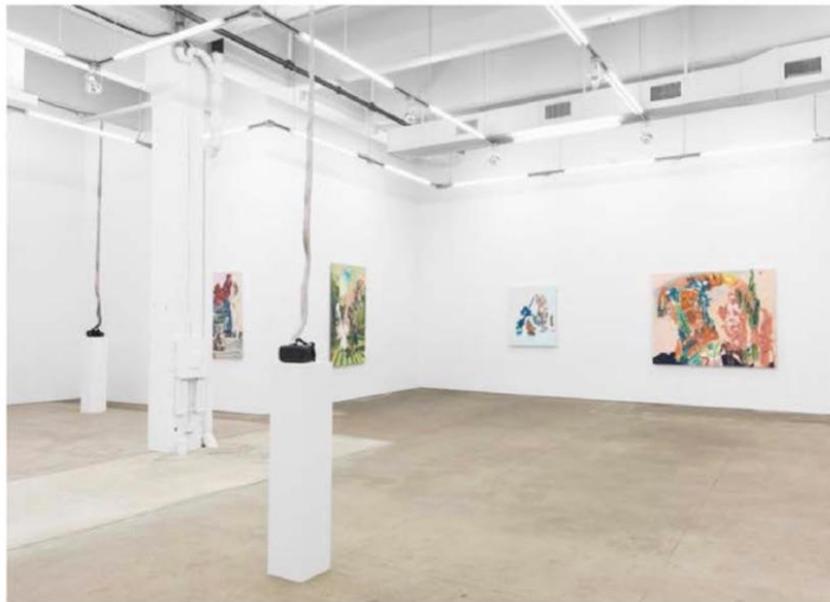
**HYPERALLERGIC****Painting as Total Environment**

Laura Owens, Keltie Ferris, Rachel Rossin, and Trudy Benson are exploring hybrid paintings that rival sculpture in their tactility, illusion, and physical depth.



by Jason Stopa

January 6, 2018



Rachel Rossin, "Lossy" (2015, installation view, image courtesy Signal Gallery)

The promotional material on the website of the virtual reality developer Oculus Rift makes some lofty, near-utopian claims, promising users an experience unlike anything else. I would argue that a similar claim with respect to painting could be made for the work of these four artists: Trudy Benson, Keltie Ferris, Laura Owens and Rachel Rossin.

Rossin is one of many recent artists, though the only one of these four, to actively engage with VR, yet she remains a painter. For a 2015 solo show at Signal Gallery, she scanned bits of her paintings — quasi-abstractions with some recognizable imagery — and other images from her studio and apartment to create a short video. Viewers had to use a Rift headset, through which they were thrust into a disparate environment of fragmented forms that occasionally dissolve into white, negative space. Attempting to locate themselves somewhere between the painting/apartment, the negative space, and their own bodily experience as they navigate the virtual space, viewers enter a fourth dimension that goes beyond traditional conventions of a physical encounter with a static, painted object in space and time.

Fold Magazine

January 2018



AGENDA BY NADJA OERTELT

# Rachel Rossin's Virtual Realities

*How we lose touch with our bodies in virtual spaces.*

PEAK PERFORMANCE



*Over the past few years, Rachel Rossin has established herself as a pioneer of virtual reality art. Her last show, “Peak Performance” at Signal Gallery in New York, was a reflection on her experiences with the form. The work she created for it is like wreckage salvaged from the virtual world for our earthly study: beautiful paintings and sculptures based on VR renderings, and vivariums preserving slices of it. The larger point to these pieces is the inherent disembodiment of virtual reality — the sensation we get in VR that our physical bodies are irrelevant. Nadja Oertelt (science producer, documentarian, and co-founder of Massive Sci) caught up with Rossin to discuss the show, and together they delved into a deep conversation about art and humans caught between Virtual Reality and the supposedly real world.*

**NO: Your latest show “Peak Performance” deals with disembodiment in VR.**

**What got you thinking about your own body in relation to virtual space?**

**RR:** I had been working for a year on a Virtual Reality series [“*The Sky is a Gap*”]. “Peak Performance” was created in response to the disembodied feeling I got while sculpting in VR. The sketches I made for it felt like body awareness exercises. Instead of looking at a reference image, I was recalling the memory of what having a body was like. In VR, you feel like the memory of a body, the emotional memory of a body. I thought about what parts of my body I remembered. Like, in one instance, I’m just lungs with a keyboard — a disembodied state of consciousness on the Internet, with residue of these extremely primitive and emotional interactions. I just kept coming across that feeling. I missed my body.

**Was it nostalgic?**

Yes, there was a nostalgia for the body, but through a digital lens. It was almost like I was already a digital entity, a proxy of myself recalling what it was like to have a body. So, the paintings and the virtual reality environments were about that, and in tandem I made plexiglass pieces, which were 3D prints of those environments. I printed out the paintings and then used a blowtorch to form these substrates. I put on a flame-retardant suit and folded the plexiglass around my body, giving it these kind of impossible hugs.

**How did it feel to hug warm plexiglass?**

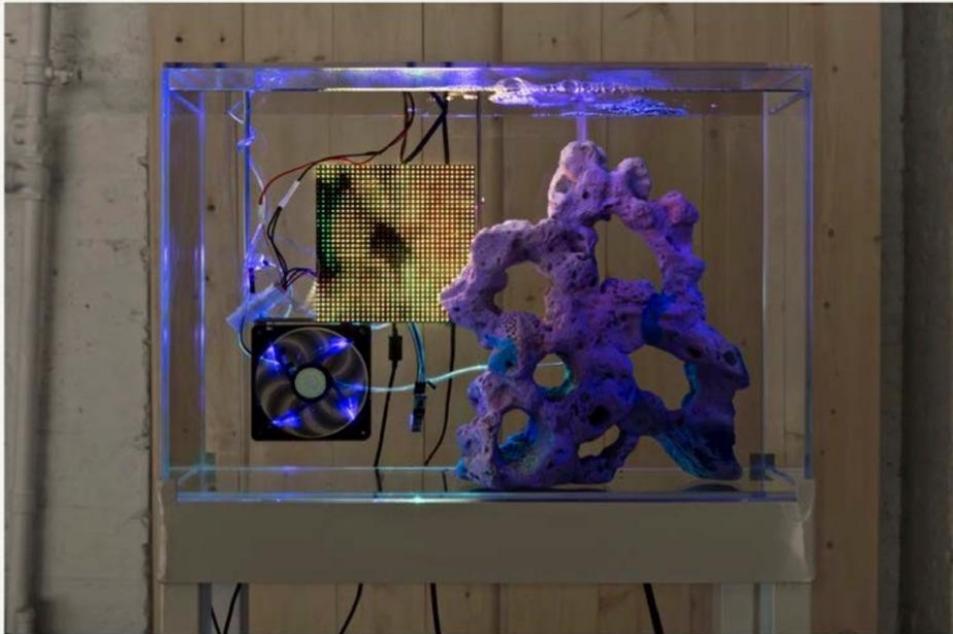
It was soft in this weird way, and then it hardened. I would heat the entire piece of plexi, burn it and then curl it around myself. It's sort of like a safety response or something. There's a sadness to those sculptures.

**It's like you have to grieve the process of having lost something in VR because you can't be embodied. The whole thing is like a big memento mori for reality.**

That's the internet too. It's all about death! [Laughs.] The medium itself is about death. It's like a facsimile of reality.

**Do you remember the first time that you had a disembodied experience in VR?**

It was pretty stupid, actually. I was just saying "Where's my body?" over and over again. It started off as that, at least: "Oh this is interesting, oh cool weird. Where's my body? Oh, look at that dog over there! Where's my body?" But then, if you stay in VR long enough, you eventually get used to it and then you feel sad about it. I was working on the roll-out for a Tilt Brush ad campaign. I spent a 10-hour workday in VR doing a piece for them, and I felt the ghost of my physical body overlaid in virtual reality after working so many hours. It was sad! I took the headset off and like I felt like a piece of metal. I felt so alien. I also ate too much candy that day so maybe it was not a totally normal experience, but I knew I had done a bad thing as soon as I got out onto the street. It was something I hadn't felt before. It reminded me of when people come out of deprivation tanks. I had had a lot of visual input and a marker for where my hands were in VR, which kept me tethered, but it was like I had lost all sense of my legs. It was hard to walk and I remember thinking, "I need to take a shower and get my body back." I love computers, of course. I want to be inside the computer. But after that I was like, *I want to be outside the computer now.*



**Do you think VR is uncomfortable enough that it will prevent us from staying in those spaces for too long?**

Yes, and I hope that virtual reality doesn't get better. I think it should stay uncomfortable and ugly and awkward. The fact that it's uncomfortable is a good thing for now. The risk with VR turning into something easy or something that feels like a part of our body, or even when it's no longer screen-based—that's where I start to get a little uncomfortable. Because I think that's when it will become an experience where people start forgetting how to walk.

**How many hours a day do you spend in VR?**

When I am developing on a piece, I like go in and check it out for 10 minutes at a time. I take a lot of breaks when I'm doing a lot of developing. Spending 10 hours in virtual reality is definitely not part of my routine!

**If VR was more comfortable, would you be happy spending more time in it?**

I'm happy being in between the two worlds. Or rather, I'm happy being based here in reality. I think we're also forgetting that virtual reality will probably seep into this reality more than we will go into it — in the sense that biotech will allow us to change our own bodies. The reasons you would want to transcend this reality would be because of time and space, or the limitations of gravity. If we get to a place where we're able to grow a new heart for ourselves — that's when VR seeps into our reality. That's actually when it's sneakier and scarier.

**How do you think about the relationship between the internet and VR as mediums?**

It's funny, because the internet is like the Id. It's a place where we can dissociate. We have primitive or reptilian brain reactions on the internet, anger and lust. We are evolutionarily wired to find negative patterns because it's evolutionary advantageous. It's fascinating that you have this reservoir — the internet — and it still elicits those responses even though we're disembodied. VR is a medium. The Internet isn't a medium because it doesn't have a single author. VR is more like a video game. So it's like saying "What is the link between the internet and video games?" They're in the same aisle at the Best Buy, but they're not the same thing. I've benefited personally from being able to change my identity, in order to feel safe, or in order to make money. The way that I first started making money was as a programmer and a web designer, and because I couldn't get any jobs with a female name, I had to change my name to Robert or Ray. So, I've reaped the benefits of being anonymous. We have this idea that technology is sort of aspirational, like the Internet is a pretty high-tech thing but we can't figure out empathy on it, and that's what everybody is calling on VR to solve. It's like they want it to be the empathy provider.

**But how can VR be an empathy machine if it's replicating a reality where we have trouble empathizing?**

Yeah, that's true. Of course, expecting VR to be an empathy machine when we can't even figure that out in this world is silly. I think it's dark, you know: what is the impact of technology on our consciousness and our sense of ethics and how we will be able to relate to each other? Certainly social media does not seem to improve things and I think people are waiting for VR to seep into social media.

**We want love from VR. We want it to save us!**

Well, we also want to be God. It's what people talk about in their hopes for the singularity.



**For people who are thinking deeply about technology and using it for their art, these questions seem important.**

I mean, it's almost like, why do painters paint? We still don't think of technology as a medium in the same way that painting or sculpture is. I grew up making paintings on top of Dot Matrix printers. While learning to program, I was learning how to paint, so it does feel like second nature. Using technology is playing with entropy in a metaphorical way. Technology is a metaphor or a lens for the human experience, for the way that we perceive reality. That is at the heart of what's fascinating and complex and paradoxical about it. It's the promise of immortality while still being so frail, so errant, and so dumb, you know? And that's what drives certain artists to use the medium that they use. I love painting for similar reasons. But right now, I'm actually in the process of building hardware and neural networks. I'm teaching it how to make work like me. And that's super funny because it's really bad. It's adorable.

**Does the neural net have a name?**

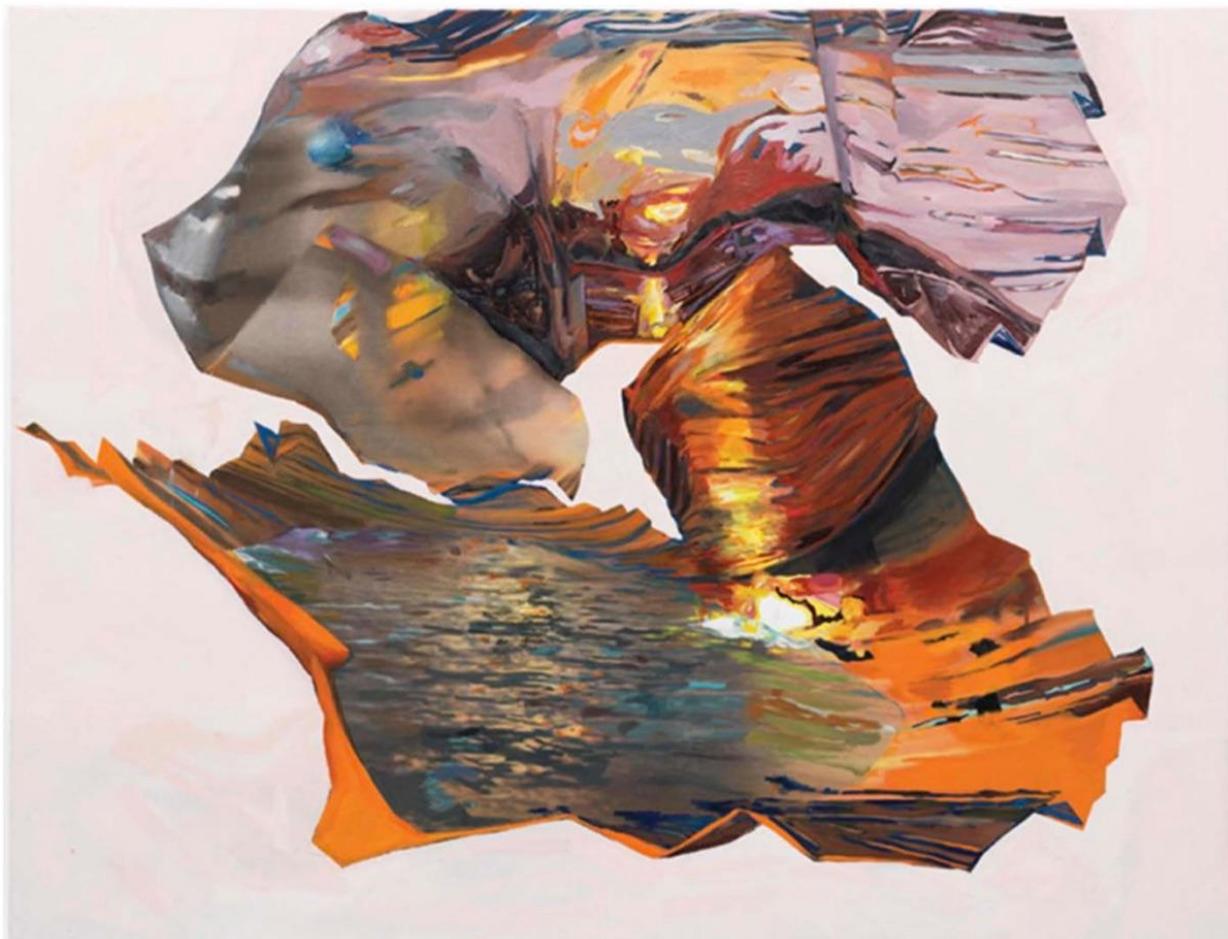
No. But it will have a male name probably, if it ever gets a name. [Laughs] I like technology because it's a mirror of ourselves. You know, my work now is all these sterile autopsies with copper wires. They just feel like bodies! I'm working all day with these electronics and they're all naked.

**Do you cover them up when you leave your studio — you know, for the sake of modesty?**

Was that a Rorschach test to see how crazy I am? No, I don't.

Artforum

January 2016

**ARTFORUM**

Rachel Rossin, *After GTA V*, 2015, oil on canvas, 60 × 78".

**Rachel Rossin**

ZIEHERSMITH

Themes from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* loom large throughout William Gibson's 2003 novel *Pattern Recognition*, which characterizes an American protagonist's trip to the UK as a disorienting encounter with a "mirror-world." But while Carroll framed his chiral universe as the product of minds and dreams, Gibson found alterity in machines and devices. Both these modes seemed alive in "Lossy," Rachel Rossin's recent solo show, whose nine paintings and a piece experienced via an Oculus Rift virtual-reality headset—titled *I Came and Went as a Ghost Hand*, 2015—bore unmistakable traces of Carroll's dark yet innocent whimsy as well as Gibson's tech-saturated neurasthenia.

Exhibiting an Oculus Rift work is a risky business. It's apt to monopolize the attention of novelty seekers while causing skeptics—those who can't forgive the burgeoning medium for its rough edges and unresolved questions—to shuffle quickly on by. (One such unresolved question: Should an Oculus Rift headset be exhibited on a pedestal?) In "Lossy," these risks yielded rewards when the device's limitations became a foil to painting's by-now-familiar constraints. There's nothing that quite emphasizes the static materiality of paint like a virtual world that offers zero physical resistance as viewers move specter-like through fragmented forms. In *I Came and Went as a Ghost Hand*, that virtual world lay somewhere between *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and *The Martha Stewart Show*: Its two-and-a-half-minute looped mix of landscape and domestic space included canned goods in a fridge door overhead, a multicolored bed seemingly underfoot, and walls and vases and shrubbery drifting in place with the languor of inner tubes on a pool.

Overall, Rossin's process is a sort of exquisite corpse played out between human and machine: To create her canvases, she scanned various kinds of images and digitally manipulated them, then painted the results as observed from a computer screen. These image deformations were more than just your garden-variety Photoshop play: For the piece *After GTA V*, 2015, the artist began with the image of a sunset from *Grand Theft Auto V* (2013), and then crumpled and wadded it up, a bit like Richard Tuttle might crumple a canvas—the difference being that Rossin did so in simulated 3-D space, using photogrammetry software (which assigns and records distances between various coordinates of an image), and then translated the on-screen results back into an oil on canvas.

A similar process led to the genesis of *Mirror Milk*, 2015, which at first seems to depict a roughly painted kitten through a filter of soft tropicalia. The feline visage within, as it turns out, is a scanned image of a drawing Rossin made as a child. (According to Rossin, the work's title nods to Carroll's Alice asking her pet cat about "looking-glass milk"; to some Gibson fans, the title also inevitably evokes the "mirror-world milk" described in *Pattern Recognition*.) Meanwhile, the seed image of *Self Portrait*, 2015, was just that—an image of the artist, around which she digitally wrapped a scanned JPEG of a painting from her previous show. After subjecting the already warped images to a software simulation of gravitational forces, she then rendered the outcome as a painting; the result looks like a melting rainbow-sherbet bust of Baphomet.

The abstract imagery in Rossin's compositions seemingly comes from two places: from her own expressionist intuition and from rule-based, algorithm-driven filters of her image-editing software. (If the former inherits something of Carroll's world, produced via the unconscious, the latter inhabits the spirit of Gibson's, constituted via technology.) The show's fireworks happened at the intersection of these two modes, where the optical gobbledygook generated by a computer was rendered by hand as oils on canvas, and framed in the evolving tradition of abstract painting. In "Lossy," there was most certainly a kid hacker flexing her muscles. But the show revealed another image of Rossin as well: a painter who, for the moment, has found a very good vantage point from which to survey the chaos of a shifting media landscape.

—Dawn Chan

Whitehot Magazine

June 2015



## The Transformative Effect of Rachel Rossin



*Rachel Rossin, Installation view, Elliott Levensglick Gallery, New York, NY*

Rachel Rossin, *Shelter of a Limping Substrate*

Elliott Levensglick Gallery

40 East 75th Street, New York, NY

through June 30th, 2015

By **JEFF GRUNTHANER**, JUN. 2015

Exhibiting at Elliot Levensglick gallery through June 30th, the "virtual *en plein air* paintings" that compose New York-based Rachel Rossin's solo show function like acts of translation, if not transliteration. Titled "Shelter of a Limping Substrate," the six oil paintings on exhibit in Levensglick's single-room, Upper East Side space mingle pop-culture hermeticism-warped landscapes of floriated patterns - with a tried and true, almost codified application of Impressionistic and Expressionist technique.

A show of, yes, flowers, Rossin rendered her themes digitally, creating globular dispersions of peonies, pansies and lilies uncannily reminiscent of the Google Maps glitches collected by the programmer Peder Norrby. She then painted out these designs onto canvas. And while the actual relation between the digital originals and the tactilely painted copies is arguably more conceptual than mimetic—Rossin suggestively recreates her spectrally abstracted flowers against a pastel backdrop, rather than reproducing them in contextual detail—what's primarily beautiful about these works is their fidelity to the historic moment of 19th century *en plein air* painting.

"Shelter of a Limping Substrate" is a kind of backstabbing allusion to the boredom of landscape painting generally, and has a double-referential quality about it. On the one hand, to quote the press release, Rossin's paintings act as a mortar or substrate flourishing "the underlying layer in 3D imaging, the most fundamental surface upon which the rest is built." But they're also reflective, not like a dome of many-colored glass, but like the attentiveness that stares into a computer screen. The diffusion of light that might characterize a Monet is here a kind of luminous scrim in relation to which Rossin's pre-programmed flowers take on a decidedly ludic aspect.

The transformative effect of the way Rossin manipulates light is perhaps most manifest in her Soutinesque *Pansies in Field* (2015). Below the cartoonishly elongated flowers indicated by the title, you see what appear to be daisies that look like egg yokes trundling on a wave of carpet. This kind of interiority—both psychological and spatial—pervades the show, and is the upshot of a practice that doesn't look beyond the studio for new sources of light and inspiration, but toward a digitally constructed world where flowers and light virtually interweave.

An aura of symbolism surrounds the subject-matter Rossin has chosen to portray. One is reminded of Georgia O'Keeffe and of the vaginal significance ascribed to flowers generally. There's a kind of heraldry at play in Rossin's titles. Lilies symbolize devotion; pansies, remembrance; peonies portend a happy marriage. But these literary connotations are tempered by the more formal qualities of the work. Rossin substantially translates images into paintings, while preserving the distinguishing marks characteristic of each. This is echoed in her themes; even in their wilding transformative state, the daisies that have become eggs still retain outwardly recognizable features.

The works that stem from Rossin's multimedia practice are fluxional recreations of a process where the natural becomes digital, only to become natural again. Her paintings toy with the familiar, while never falling into the trap of banality. There's a quickness, intelligence and humor to them that is very much the artist's own—notwithstanding her allusion to Impressionist and Expressionist precedents. In a world where everyone is flattening their faces against the semipermeable glass of a computer screen, searching out the same old commodified poisons, Rossin's virtual *en plein air* paintings provide an antidote. **WM**