

NATURES OF REALITY



Statement taken from the Art Gallery of Regina website: [archived page for Lisa Birke: Natures of Reality \(artgalleryofregina.ca\)](https://www.artgalleryofregina.ca/2018/05/15/lisa-birke-natures-of-reality/)

Exhibition Statement by Sandee Moore, curator Art Gallery of Regina

Piece together a personalized narrative experience in digital artist Lisa Birke's immersive video installation *Natures of Reality*.

Do you feel frustrated by Instagram feeds filled with face-tuned selfies and meaningless platitudes in fancy script? Do you worry about deep fakes or skewed notions of reality induced by blockbuster films rife with CGI (computer-generated imagery)? Have you considered that digital media can enable us to memorialize small but profound moments, such as ladybugs gathered on a twig, or express existential truths?

Birke's immersive video installation invites viewers to consider media from all of these perspectives.

A series of videos shot by the artists over several years are projected on the floor, acting as a meditative reflecting pool. These videos invite visitors to experience small and extraordinary moments: falling snow, feet in melting ice, ladybugs on a branch in the wind, a dead deer.

Another video series by Birke is jarring in its slick artifice. A blond spokesmodel marches across a succession of natural backdrops, out-of-place in her inexhaustible wardrobe of slinky gowns à la Vanna White. The model holds aloft a series of digitally composited 3D signs, advertising these meaningless platitudes to a barren landscape. Empty, prescriptive, and tongue-in-cheek, phrases such as "live large," "go with the flow," and "survival of the fittest" create uncomfortable juxtapositions, bringing up questions of entitlement and how meaning is created or demanded of our lives by society and mass

culture, for whom, and at what cost? Other statements, such as "Viewpoint" and "Glass Half Empty/Full," hint at the possibility for different perspectives to emerge.

In contrast to these laughably hollow, larger than life "affirmations," community members share genuine stories of finding meaning in their lives in sixteen videos created in process with the artist. Birke worked with community members to create paper avatars that she animated using motion capture technology to speak their words. These stories, presented on monitors and cell phone-triggered augmented reality dispersed throughout the gallery, encompass diverse voices and perspectives. Gallery visitors are encouraged to walk between monitors and AR as the voices start and stop speaking, piecing together a personal narrative experience.

Many community members' narratives reveal that meaning emerges not from airbrushed perfection but from acceptance and celebration of difference, tolerance, finding one's own truth, and the power of community. Through the consumerist din of prescriptive norms and aspirational desires that saturate our media, Birke's *Natures of Reality* invites us to hear the truth about the meaning of life: beauty, magic, and wealth of meaning lie in complexity and nuance.

Natures of Reality includes animations created in collaboration with the following community members: Angel Hayden, Brita Lind, Claire Yacishyn, Damian Thomas, Dawn Thomas-Cameron, Deborah A. Stevens, Hani Rukh E Qamar, Joely BigEagle-Kequahtoway, Julie Gobeil, Kamilla Wolk-Lind, Karishma Joshi, Keshia Katie Hanson, Nicole Gaddie, Precious Tushabe-Torr, shimby, and Yvonne Niegas.

The artist recognizes the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Art Gallery of Regina and Common Weal Community Arts and wishes to thank Michael Fleig, Qihang Liang, and Leanne Read for production assistance and the community members for their participation.

The AGR thanks Common Weal Community Arts for facilitating co-creation of artworks between the artist and community members.



Natures of Reality is sponsored by SaskTel.



About Lisa Birke:

Lisa Birke has had solo exhibitions across Canada. Her award-winning short films have screened at film/video festivals and media centres internationally, including *Time is Love*, International Video Art Program, CCA (Centre for Contemporary Art, Glasgow, Scotland), Vancouver International Film Festival (Canada), CAFKA (Contemporary Art Forum Kitchener and Area, Canada), Tom Thomson Art Gallery (Canada), Athens International Film + Video Festival (USA), Cologne OFF X (Germany and touring), along with many others.

The short film *Calendar Girls* was awarded a “Jury Award for Creative Achievement” at the Arizona International Film Festival (USA), the Jury Award at ForadCamp (Barcelona, Spain) and was installed at Manif d’/Art (Quebec City Biennale, 2017). *The Knits* screened, most notably, at Slamdance Film Festival (USA, 2018) and the Florida Film Festival (USA, 2018) and was mounted as a solo exhibition at Cambridge Art Galleries (Canada, 2017).

The International Short Film Week Regensburg (Germany) presented a survey program of Birke’s short film work in 2018. Her newest work, *The Land of Milk and Honey*, an interactive 360 video installation, was included in the contemporary art biennial at the Remai Modern in Saskatoon, Canada, in the fall of 2020.

Lisa Birke is a recipient of an Ontario Arts Council Media Artists Project Creation Grant (for *The Knits*), grants from the Canada Council for the Arts, along with other awards and scholarships. Birke is currently Assistant Professor of Digital and Extended Media at the University of Saskatchewan.

artist led exhibition walk-through:

watch on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/g7eRK4LV4f8>

media coverage:

Talk of the Town, AccessNow TV, October 13 -19

Talk of The Town with Lisa Peters airs Mon – Fri 7 am, 12 pm & 5:30 pm on AccessNow TV Channels 7 & 70, 507 or the AccessNow TV app.

Global News Morning, October 21 7:30 - 8:20 AM

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