

Press Release



Warm Worlds and Otherwise

Anna Bunting-Branch

7 October to 9 December 2018

Preview: 6 October, 6–8 pm

An exhibition including experimental new Virtual Reality works by Anna Bunting-Branch will open this Autumn at Wysing Arts Centre and then tour to FACT, Liverpool and QUAD, Derby. *Warm Worlds and Otherwise* – the artist's first major solo exhibition – draws on Bunting-Branch's long-standing interest in the encounters between feminist practice and science fiction, exploring ideas of world-building, embodied perception and technologies of representation.



Anna Bunting Branch, *META*, 2018 (still), Interactive Digital Work.
Courtesy the artist.

The exhibition's centre-piece is *META*, a new VR work. Bunting-Branch, working closely with digital arts studio Workflow, has transformed her hand-painted characters, props and backdrops into an immersive virtual story-world to be experienced by the gallery visitor. As the viewer is transported between environments – from an unknown planet to a restaurant orbiting in space and beyond – they inhabit the bodies of different human and non-human characters in the narrative.

Entering the gallery, the viewer encounters a simple looping animation offering the words 'Well-come, World Traveller!' Beyond the animation, in an enclosed area of the gallery, sits *META*. Here, four specially designed viewing stations present *META* on a series of modified Oculus Go headsets, which have been extensively re-

modelled by Bunting-Branch. Meanwhile, the exhibition is scored by a newly commissioned ambient sound work by artist Aliyah Hussain.

In Wysing's reception, a small reference library collates some of the material that informed the research for *Warm Worlds and Otherwise*, including classic and contemporary feminist science fiction such as Naomi Mitchison's *Memoirs of a Spacewoman* (1962) and Aliette de Bodard's 'Immersion' (2012) and the collection of short stories by James Tiptree Jr. (the pen name of Alice Bradley Sheldon), from which the exhibition takes its title.

Together with these examples of fiction, Bunting-Branch's interest in the reconfiguration of sensory perception is also influenced by theoretical works such as Luce Irigaray's *Is the Subject of Science Sexed?* (1985) and *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans* (1934), in which bio-philosopher Jakob von Uexküll develops his concept of 'umwelten' – subjective bubble worlds unique to each and every organism.

From cutting-edge experiments in VR, to the once-revolutionary technology of the paperback book, *Warm Worlds and Otherwise* explores how technologies produce new knowledge. *META*'s painterly aesthetic references the work of artist Maria Lassnig (1919–2014) and science illustrator Maria Sibylla Merian (1647–1717), particularly their representations of embodied sensations and bodily transformations, showing Bunting-Branch's commitment to painting as an affective generative technology.

META is commissioned by Wysing Arts Centre, The Mechatronic Library, FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology), Liverpool and QUAD, Derby.

Warm Worlds and Otherwise is part of Worlds Among Us, a collaboration between Wysing Arts Centre, The Mechatronic Library, FACT, Liverpool and QUAD, Derby which launched in October 2017. The first Worlds Among Us retreat featured contributions from Rebecca Allen, Katriona Beales, Anna Bunting-Branch, Ami Clarke, Sonya Dyer, Candice Jacobs, Wilf Speller, 555-5555, Werkflow and The Mechatronic Library. Worlds Among Us aims to use new technologies to look again at the worlds we do not see. How can creating new worlds, virtual experiences and augmented perspectives help us see more of what already exists?

Warm Worlds and Otherwise and Worlds Among Us is supported using public funding by Arts Council England.

Artist Biography

Anna Bunting-Branch

Anna Bunting-Branch (born 1987, Cambridge, UK) is an artist and researcher based in London. Recent publications and events include *POEKHALI!*, Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen (2018); *'More generous and more suspicious'—Feminist SF as a worldbuilding practice*, MAP Magazine (2018); *figure, feels, fantom*, Art Licks, Issue

22 (2018); *Hauntopia/What If?*, The Research Pavilion, Venice (2017); *I AM SF*, CCA, Derry~Londonderry (2017); *The Labours of Barren House*, Jerwood Space, London (2017); *Witchy Methodologies*, ICA, London (2017). Anna is currently undertaking a practice-related PhD at Slade School of Fine Art, UCL, supported by the AHRC London Arts & Humanities Partnership. Her thesis, titled 'Things Could Be Thought Differently—Reading feminist science fiction with Luce Irigaray', considers feminist SF as a methodology to approach the speculative question of sexual difference in both theory and practice. www.annabuntingbranch.com

Collaborator Biographies

Aliyah Hussain

Aliyah Hussain's practice approaches themes found within feminist science fiction literature, in particular the possibilities of co-sharing space in domestic or social settings. Using ceramic sculpture, handmade instruments and found objects to generate sound, her work is made using contact mics and effects pedals as well as synth and melodica. Hussain is interested in exploring the physicality of sound, using feeling and sensitivity to record movement and gesture. Her sound works take influence from the tradition of scoring music for film but is made to accompany text, specifically works of feminist science fiction and she makes experimental electronic music influenced by new age, ambient and Science Fiction.

Hussain is based at Islington Mill studios, Salford, UK. She has released two EPs of experimental electronic music - 'Woman on the Edge of Time' and 'Sultana's Dream' with Manchester-based cassette tape label Sacred Tapes. She has exhibited and performed nationally and internationally, most recently at the Slade research centre and Roaming Projects, London and Castlefield Gallery, Manchester, UK.

Werkflow

Werkflow is an experimental digital arts studio based in Somerset House, London. Werkflow focus on using game engine technology to create unique work spanning the fields of music, art, fashion and advertising, alongside producing our first full-length computer game, Sovereign. As well as creating their own studio led projects, their highly collaborative practice leads them to work and consult with highly acclaimed artists, designers and institutions, creating experimental computer-generated imagery.

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WYSING ARTS CENTRE, www.wysingartscentre.org

Through its innovative work, Wysing Arts Centre influences the development of the visual arts sector in the UK. As a respected and well-connected institution operating outside the usual gallery system and urban context, Wysing is uniquely positioned to develop programmes that provide opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and ideas, and which reflect on the role of art, artists, and arts organisations in society;

acting as a testing ground for new ideas. Established in 1989, Wysing's large site in rural Cambridgeshire has been significantly developed and encompasses artist studios, a large gallery, a music recording studio, educational and project spaces, onsite accommodation, ceramics facilities, outdoor space with sculpture, and a café.

Artists who have worked at Wysing in artist residencies over recent years, developing and making new work, include Larry Achiampong and David Blandy, Ed Atkins, Jesse Darling, Michael Dean, Cécile B Evans, Evan Ifekoya, Harold Offeh, Imran Perretta, Elizabeth Price, Charlotte Prodger, Laure Prouvost, James Richards, Florian Roithmayr and Cally Spooner. During 2018 Wysing Arts Centre has offered their site and resources to artists working across a range of practices who wish to develop new work within an atmosphere of collaboration.

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Partner Biographies

FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology), Liverpool is the UK's leading media arts centre, based in Liverpool. Offering a unique programme of exhibitions, film and participant-led art projects, FACT use the power of creative technology to inspire and enrich lives.

The Mechatronic Library is a not-for-profit organisation founded by Afro-Trinbagonian Helen Starr. It is dedicated to fostering shared projects between artists, technologists and retailers; producing saleable products and experiences.

QUAD is a Cinema, Gallery, Café Bar, Digital resource and Workshop that anyone can use. QUAD a creative hub based in Derby that connects people and businesses to art and film and create opportunities for entertainment, education and participation. QUAD transforms lives through active participation in art and film.



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