

Stephen Friedman Gallery

FAD Magazine

Leading UK arts institutions to digitally revive landmark exhibitions for a new virtual arts ecosystem

Mark Westall

13 April 2021

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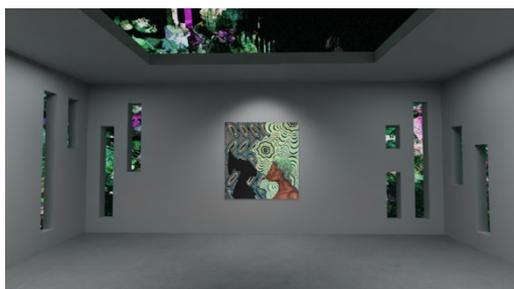


Image: TheVOV's virtual presentation of Shannon Bono's Untitled (Mangbetu) and Sian Fan's Seeping Out Skybox, as part of Sarabande's digital exhibition 'Corpus Mentis', curated by Hikari Yokoyama and Trino Verkade (2021)

Outset Contemporary Art Fund and art-science collective Visualogical have partnered to launch theVOV, a new virtual arts ecosystem launching on Monday 19th April 2021 with an exciting 10-week programme of exhibitions and live events.

For its inaugural season, 15 of the UK's leading museums and galleries – including Hayward Gallery, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, The Whitworth, Tate, Spike Island, South London Gallery, Turner Contemporary and Sarabande – are joining forces on one centralised open-access virtual destination in an unprecedented act of solidarity. Season One of theVOV will be available on Vortic Art (an extended reality (XR) platform).

Season One's inspiring programme of exhibitions includes the return of Chris Burden's iconic 14 Magnolia Doubles to South London Gallery after 15 years; a virtual rehanging of Andreas Gursky's first major UK retrospective at the Hayward Gallery in 2018; Yinka Shonibare CBE RA's open air installation at Yorkshire Sculpture Park 2013; Lisa Brice's 2018 Art Now exhibition at Tate Britain; a group show of female artists curated by Hikari Yokoyama with Sarabande; and the haunting assemblage of Ibrahim Mahama's Parliament of Ghost at The Whitworth for Manchester International Festival in 2019.

A dynamic collateral programme of live, public events will run throughout the season, inviting users to donate. From Lunchtime Tours and panel discussions with institution directors taking place inside the virtual galleries themselves through an innovative social interface co-designed by Visualogical, in collaboration with Vortic, especially for theVOV, to intimate and informal Evening Events with artists hosting interactive workshops, such as collage making, spoken word, DJ sets, and the first ever life-drawing class of a digital avatar.

TheVOV has worked closely with each institution to create a bespoke virtual gallery for the exhibitions, with some institutions creating exact replicas of their physical gallery to others creating fantastical otherworldly spaces that couldn't possibly exist in the physical realm. theVOV's vision is for these virtual spaces to become digital extensions of the physical institutions, for them to curate and programme time and time again, whilst offering new opportunities to XR artists.

TheVOV unlocks new streams of income for public arts organisations, helping them navigate the new challenge of monetising digital content. Season One debuts a pioneering micro-philanthropic model, inviting users to donate to support the arts, with funds raised being distributed equally between the participating institutions, reinforcing the ethos of unity.

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Launching in the run up to arts institutions reopening, theVOV embraces the new 'Phygital' era, where the physical and digital realms coexist symbiotically side-by-side, making the arts more accessible globally than ever.

"In these uncertain times, it is notable that the arts have proven more supportive, generous, and open across borders than almost any other sector. We have seen artists and institutions make content freely available in unprecedented ways. As we always do, Outset observed and listened to what we identified as the most pressing need of our beloved creative sector, and then we sought partners to help us respond. With the aim of echoing and amplifying their spirit of generosity, we joined forces with Visualogical. Our goal at this time is to launch a long overdue micro-philanthropic model, by bringing together 15 leading UK arts organisations, using the rich experience of the latest XR technology, and achieving unprecedented global reach. Join us on our journey towards a stronger and more financially independent creative sector that thanks to you will be more resilient than ever. Every single contribution counts, and we count on everyone to join us in helping our creatives to thrive and continue giving us all the most human of all gifts." - Candida Gertler OBE and Nicolette Cavaleros, Co-Directors, Outset Contemporary Art Fund.