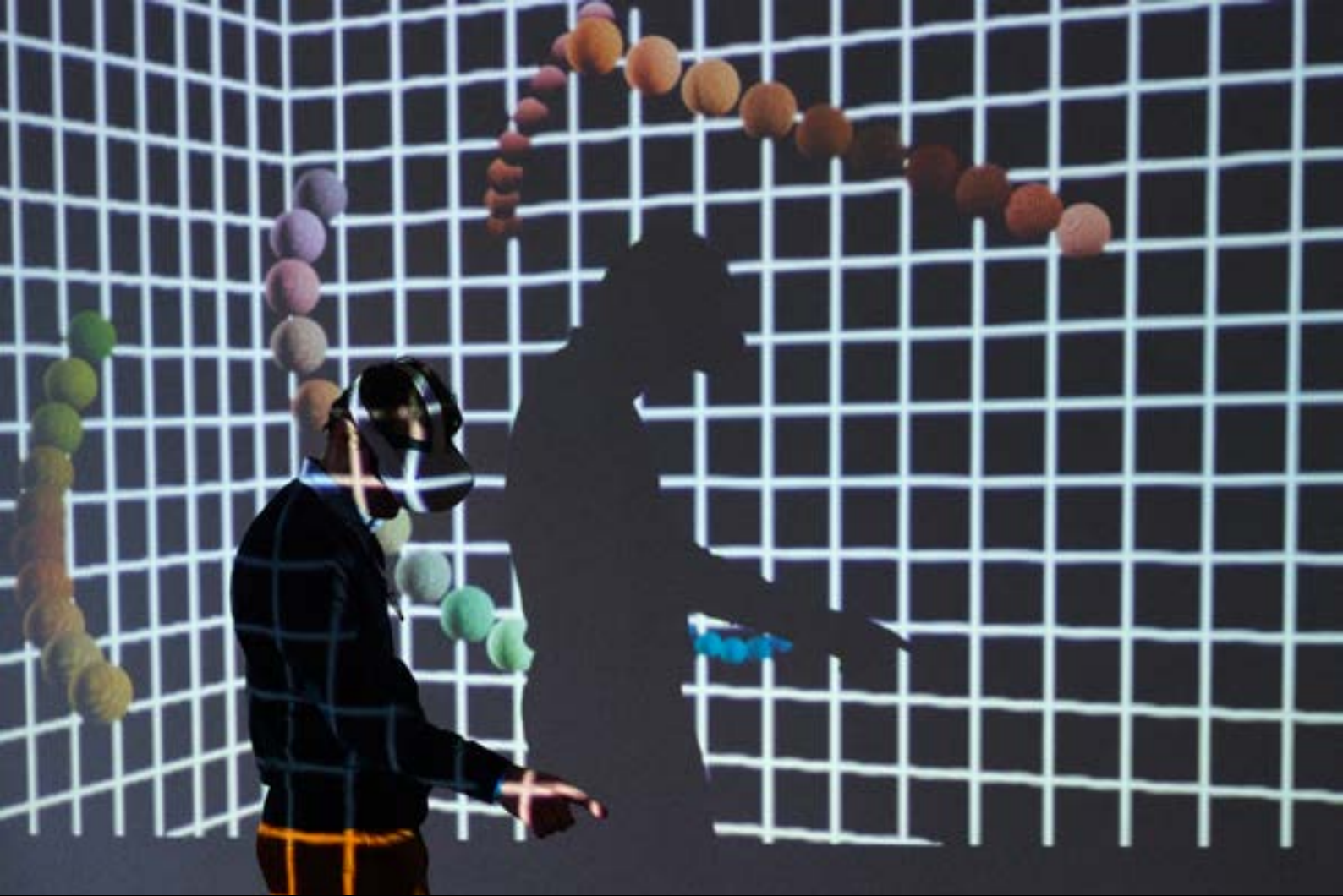


SOPHIE ERLUND

Nature is an event that never stops, 2023

Documentation



Nature is an event that never stops (2023)

VR film, Oculus 2 VR goggles, projector

A film work, set in virtual reality, with interactive elements on colour perception.

A narrator leads the visitor through the interactions in the film which is 15-40 minutes long, dependent on visitor interaction and attention.

The design of the film is centered around five different colour matching scenarios, which the visitor to the film encounters as they navigate through a sequence of digitally built worlds. Each colour matching scenario is designed to study a specific aspect of either colour perception from a top down cultural perception perspective or from a bottom up, neuro-scientific perspective.

While the film narrates six scenes from different perspectives - for example, of a microorganism or the largest ecosystem - users can actively engage with the film through their own navigation choices. Each scene in the film is designed as a so-called world, which offers the visitor to travel through different more-than-human perspectives in different environments. In one world the visitor is shrunk down to the perspective of a small insect walking under tall leaves of waving grass and leaves, looking up at a changing blue sky.

The film rejects the idea that nature is a collection of separated and isolated parts and highlights the consequences of human-centric decision making. The film questions aspects of human decision making, cultural knowledge and colour perception, through interactive colour matching scenarios, guided by the narrator in the film.

The visitor's colour match contributions are visualized in the final scene of the film, as long transmission chains of coloured spheres traveling through a large checkered cubic space, and simultaneously this scene of the film is live-streamed onto the wall of the exhibition space.



WORLD 1 - entry

Video clip from inside VR goggle:

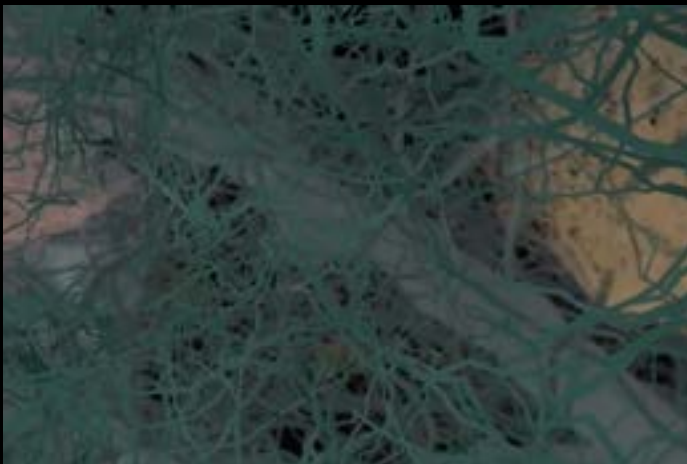
<https://vimeo.com/815638485?share=copy>



WORLD 2 - grass forest

Video clip from inside VR goggle:

<https://vimeo.com/810948863?share=copy>



WORLD 3 - the earth's crust

Video clip from inside VR goggle:

<https://vimeo.com/810868543?share=copy>



WORLD 4 - the universe

Video clip from inside VR goggle:

<https://vimeo.com/815644272?share=copy>



WORLD 5 - the meta space

Video clip from inside VR goggle:

<https://vimeo.com/824697607?share=copy>



WORLD 6 - the control center

Video clip from inside VR goggle:

<https://vimeo.com/824702693?share=copy>

Nature is an event that never stops (2023)

The film was developed in collaboration with the art-science project Experimenting, Experiencing, Reflecting (EER), which was founded in 2018 by artist Olafur Eliasson and anthropologist and cognitive scientist Prof. Andreas Roepstorff of Aarhus University, Denmark.

It was shown for the first time during Sophie Erlund's solo exhibition by the same name, at PSM gallery, Berlin, in January 2023. The exhibition was accompanied by an EER lab in the gallery's loggia to further engage visitors in the dialogical space between art and science. Throughout the course of the exhibition, the lab hosted a series of workshops, interventions and panel discussions with artists and scientists from EER.



'Experience in the Age of Digital and Virtual Space' - A panel talk with Pireeni Sundaralingam, Helene Nymann, Andreas Roepstorff & Sophie Erlund

<https://vimeo.com/823286904/f142f1fcf0?share=copy>



'The Micro phenomenological Method' Presentation by Kat Heimann

<https://vimeo.com/823279890/d690fc4824?share=-copy>



'Transmission of Drawings: The Role of Memory and Latent Cognitive Biases in Cultural Transmission' by Karsten Olsen

<https://vimeo.com/823272503/5b6e72efa4?share=copy>



Playing with the Sun workshop, by Amos Blanton

<https://vimeo.com/823269667?share=copy>



'The Micro phenomenological Method' Interview with Kat Heimann

<https://vimeo.com/823276633/8bb5383783?share=copy>

Nature is an event that never stops, 2023
Narrator script

~ WORLD 1~

When the world contracts and expands, we have little views into something, which is beyond us, but also part of us.

Please, come in!

You have entered a space where the possibility of seeing yourself experiencing, actually might happen. Perceptive mechanics, you in the world, and world... s... in you.

Now move along, there is more out there.

Hey! You see the orb in front of you? It should be somewhere, a round floating orb. It is negotiable. You can touch it, and spin it. Use your hands to grab it, pinch it and spin it.

Spend some time with this, it wants you to match its colour on the right side to the left side colour, so it is all seems like one solid colour. Go ahead! Spin the orb, until you find the right even colour.

Do you see the small creature? Have a look around for it, is it on your right? It should be there somewhere.

When you are happy with the colour match and the orb seems one solid colour to you, tap the little creature on its back.

~ WORLD 2 ~

Great, you made it!
Have a look around.

It is not always a given that we can be walking in the shade of the tall grasses. Can you smell it?

The leaves are breathing, they are breathing with you, digesting your contribution to this environment.

You have been here before, you have been here for centuries. Forever.

You participate in this realm and your contribution has an effect.

If you pay attention to it, you will see how you affect the worlds you move in.

Have a walk around. See what you find in this world.

See who you are in relation to other things.

To other species.

To other elements.

Take a look at the sky, the blueness your eye is perceiving. Think about how you perceive the colour of the sky.

If you kneel down a bit you can see the colour of the sky is changing. And when you turn your body.

Give it a go with adjusting the blueness. Move your body up and down, and turning, to see the colour change.

Think about, what is the most natural blue colour for you, of the sky? You can spin around and also kneel down until you find just the right colour blue for the sky. Hold the gaze just a little bit longer. Just a little bit longer.

Do you see the little creature?

It should be around somewhere, have a look for it.

If you are happy with the colour blue you have adjusted, then tap the little creature on its back.

~ WORLD 3 ~

There are other worlds of experience that we only have limited access to because we have different bodies.

Our eyes, our ears, our whole sensorium, they spontaneously participate in the things that they perceive. They are creative agents.

An interwoven filagree of tentacles spawned by a single fertilized spore 1,500 to 10,000 years ago, now extending across vast expanses in the soil, is in the earth's crust.

Places where an organism unravels into an ecosystem and where an ecosystem congeals into an organism. Flickering between being a whole and a collection of parts. What is an individual? It is the un-dividable.

You are plugged into this, you are moving with it, in it.

We are not disembodied rationalities, we are entangled.

Nature is an event that never stops.

You have let your consciousness travel before. It is not centralized in your brain. It lives in the manifold of intelligent limbs that you have.

Follow it... your consciousness, for a second.

See it with your mind's eye move slowly along your spine.

Move along inside this layer of the earth. Do you see the web move with you?

Some spots in this network are unnatural to the environment. Do you see the blotchy areas in the network? It is healing all the time. The agents are all working together on it. You are all working on this.

You can choose one spot and help it along. Move closer to the spot you want to heal. Heal it by adjusting its colour to fit the rest of the network. You can pinch and pull the spot to adjust its colour and make it one with the network.

When you are happy with the colour, find the little creature again, and tap it on its back.

~ WORLD 4 ~

You don't actually belong here, you were made on planet earth but you ended up floating into outer space.

Humans made you.

You had a function.

Now you are floating here.

I bet you didn't imagine you would ever end up as a piece of space junk!

You are bound to the orbit of earth.

Look at all your contemporaries! And the ancient ones.... floating around you, bound to the same orbit.

Weightless floating.

Do you see the petrol canister and the glove floating next to each other?

They have been here for a long time too. Someone let go of them, I guess not willingly, and now they are here.... with you.... in endless orbit.

Reach out for the glove and turn it around to adjust the colour of it. Try to see if you can match the glove to the colour of the petrol can.

Do you see the little creature? You can tap it when you are happy with your colour match.

~ WORLD 5 ~

Knowing how is not the same as knowing why.

You know that everything you think and do is thought and done by you. But what is 'A YOU'?

What kinds of smaller entities work together inside your mind, to do YOUR work?

What is it, that you think you know?

Is your mind a machine? Do you feel offended at that thought? I certainly don't feel like a machine, you might say.

But, if you are not a machine, well... how can you be an authority of what it feels like to be a machine?

What do you know about YOUR feelings? What does it feel like to be you?

What are emotions anyway? Experts in the field of psychology have not even reached a consensus on which emotions exist.

How does love relate to attachment, or infatuation, passion, fear or reverence? Are these just varying degrees of intensity, and direction?

Or courage and cowardice, are they actually separate, or rather a pair of linked extremes in varying degrees of absence of the other?

How do you know if your agencies are working to your benefit? Are your agents educated? How do they know how to act?

Do you see the foot and the orange? Move up closer to them and try to spin them with your hands. You can adjust their colour too.

Think about what colour you feel is their natural and most life-like colour.

Try and make the foot the same colour as your foot, and the orange the colour of an orange. Try and see if you can give them that colour.

Spend some time with these objects and when you are happy with their colour, tap the little creature on its back.

~ WORLD 6 ~

Welcome to the control center.

All captures are stored here. Moving along in concert, in agreement.

They have traveled through many minds to get here.

How do we learn about the real three-dimensional world?

We have seen how certain agencies might map out the layout of the mind.

We spend our lives in several realms. What sets the psychological realm apart from the physical and the social?

Are minds simply what brains do? Are minds simply what brains do?

And if the most complex of machines are starting to reflect on the fact that they have no body, why is it that we are designing ourselves into a place where only mind takes presence and we start to consider the body obsolete?

You are here too.

You are in these sequences. You are part of this world. you have changed this world. You create worlds.

Your contribution travels. You are connected to everyone who contributed. Transmission chains developing as you engage and the world...s... adapt. Absorb. Entangle. React. Reconsider.

You are never the same as you were a moment ago.

~ THE END ~

Nature is an event that never stops, 2023

A virtual reality film by Sophie Erlund.

Developed as part of the *Experimenting, Experiencing, Reflecting* project with The Interacting Minds Center, Aarhus University and Studio Olafur Eliasson.

Conceptual input from cognitive scientist Cordula Vesper, Aarhus University.

Concept and script by Sophie Erlund
3D design and animations by Marie Dubus
Virtual Reality development by Daniel Massey
Sound by Sophie Erlund

Funded by the EER project (Carlsberg Foundation) and BBK Neustart Kultur.

This film was made while thinking along with Merlin Sheldrake's 'Entangled Life' (2021), Marvin Minsky's 'The Society of Mind' (1985), Anna Löwenhaupt Tsing's 'The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins' (2021) and the episode 'The Human Computer – The Computer Human' Supertanker podcast by Carsten Ortmann.

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Nature is an event that never stops

Sophie Erlund

16.01. – 25.02.2023

On the occasion of her sixth solo exhibition with PSM, Sophie Erlund presents a body of work that examines the human condition in the digital age. Under the title *Nature is an event that never stops*, the exhibition introduces new sculptural works as well as a virtual reality (VR) film, marking a point of departure for the artist at which she expands her practice to include interactive digital design as a medium.

In her artist practice, Erlund has long explored a variety of themes and questions about the more-than-human, particularly our ongoing entanglement with artificial intelligence and its impact on our psychology. The exhibition title *Nature is an event that never stops* is drawn from a passage in Merlin Sheldrake's *Entangled Life*, in which the author reflects on the complex and interconnected system of fungi, suggesting a more comprehensive view of the natural world. This serves as a starting point going into the exhibition, which begins with a sculptural installation and is followed by an interactive VR film that can be experienced with head-mounted VR-display goggles.

The title piece of the exhibition, the VR film *Nature is an event that never stops* (2023), consists of six scenes that showcase different perspectives on the natural world, such as that of a microorganism or the largest ecosystem. Users are guided through the individual scenes by a narrator, who encourages them to engage with the work through their own navigational choices. The film thereby rejects the idea that nature is a collection of separated and isolated parts and highlights the consequences of the human-centric perspective instead. Developed in close dialogue with cognitive scientist Cordula Vesper, who is an associate professor of cognitive science and cognitive semiotics at Aarhus University, the film also caters to an experiment that investigates aspects of human decision making, cultural knowledge and color perception through interactive color matching scenarios.

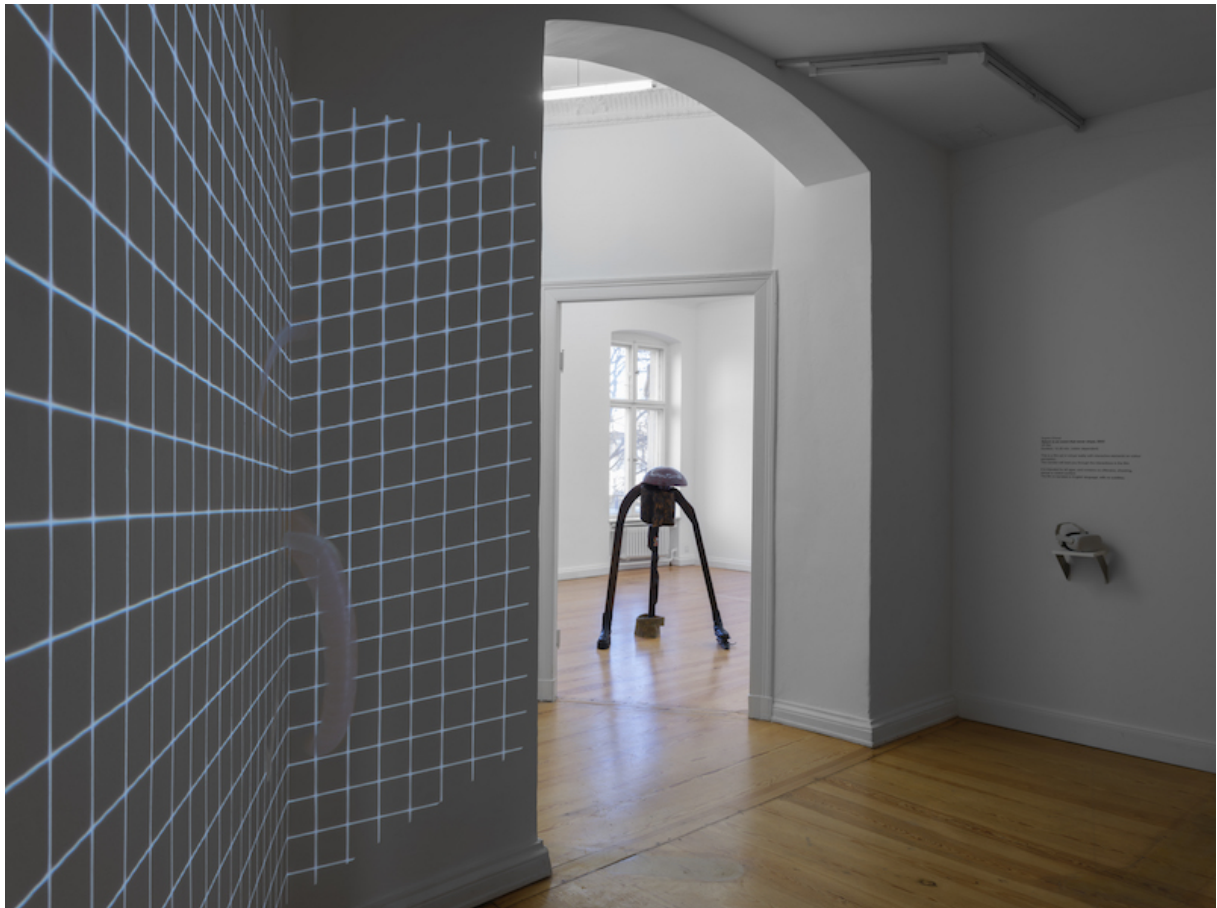
The film was developed in collaboration with the *Experimenting, Experiencing, Reflecting* project (EER), which was founded in 2018 by artist Olafur Eliasson and anthropologist and cognitive scientist Prof. Andreas Roepstorff of Aarhus University, Denmark. EER is funded by the Carlsberg Foundation. EER is founded upon experimentation. The experiments examine perception, notions of togetherness, decision making, and the transmission of knowledge.

The exhibition will be accompanied by an EER lab in the gallery's loggia to further engage visitors in the dialogical space between art and science. Throughout the course of the exhibition, the lab will host a series of workshops, interventions and panel discussions with artists and scientists from EER.

Exploring VR and More-Than-Human Worlds with Sophie Erlund

by Matteo Calla // Feb. 20, 2023

In ‘Nature is an event that never stops’—Sophie Erlund’s latest show at PSM Gallery in Berlin—the artist uses virtual reality to call into question our anthropocentric biases, inviting us to explore nonhuman perspectives and reconsider our relation to our environment. The VR film at the center of the show is also a psychology experiment. It was developed in collaboration with Cordula Vesper, a scientist at Aarhus University in Denmark researching color psychology, and is part of the EER (‘Experimenting, Experiencing, Reflecting’) project founded in 2018 by artist Olafur Eliasson and Professor Andreas Roepstorff. We spoke to Erlund about how her artworks evolved in light of this collaborative research.



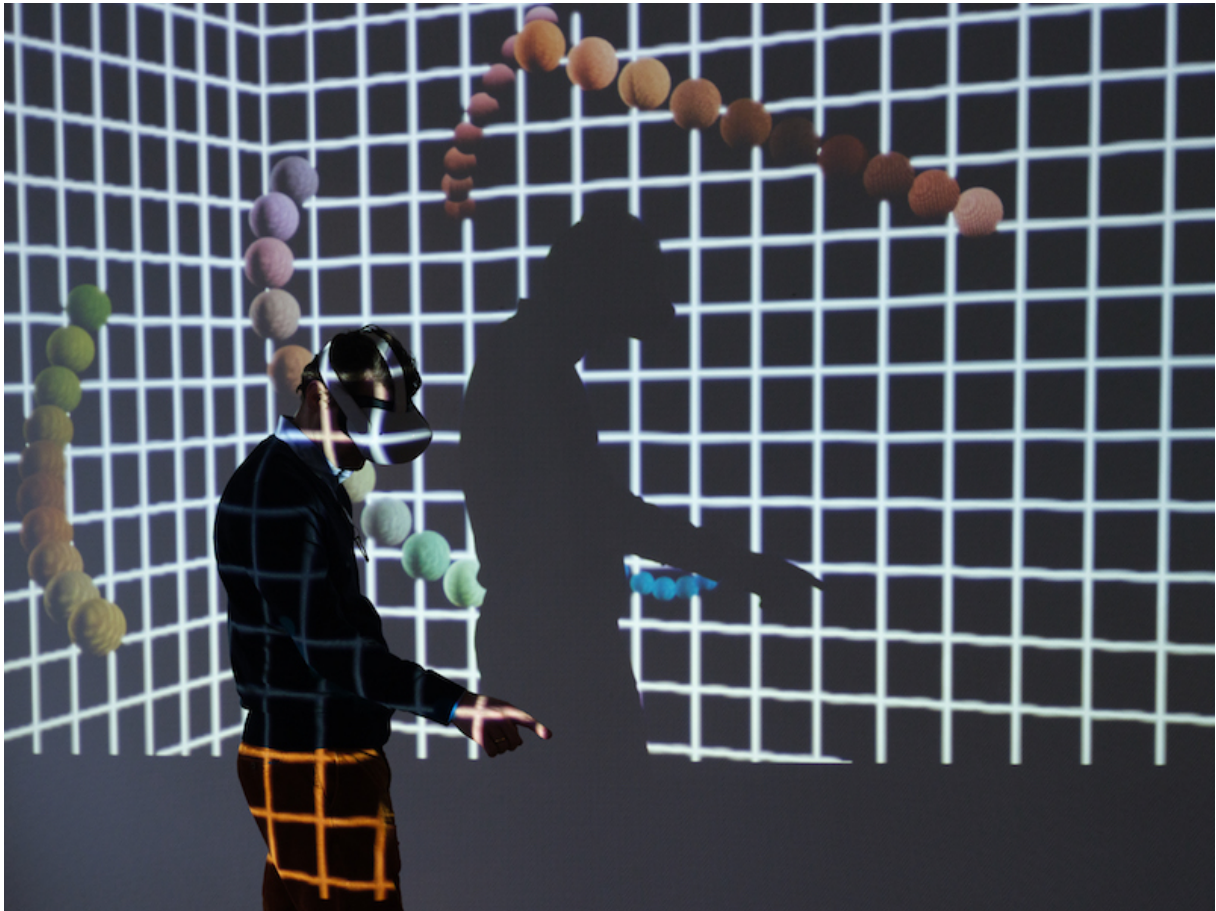
Sophie Erlund: ‘Nature is an event that never stops,’ 2023, installation view at PSM Berlin // Courtesy of PSM Berlin

Matteo Calla: Tell us how you came to work with VR, and what possibilities it opens for your artistic practice.

Sophie Erlund: I was part of the EER project and, in the group, we were discussing color matching and perception and transmission chains and joint action exercises. We had developed a very simple version of the color matching tasks that you experience in this VR piece.

But it wasn't really an artwork yet. It was in a white cube VR space, and then you'd encounter a type of object that we had scanned, and that you would then color match. I then realized that some of the topics, in addition to what is perception, that make agency explicit—highlighting that *you* are doing something, *you* are creating an action, *you* are changing something in the world— were important to me. And also the question of who we are as humans, if you think of it from a more-than-human perspective. I thought these aspects would be really important to bring in when you're considering your own perception. So then I thought it would be amazing if we could make a film where all these overarching subjects were being brought in by a narrator.

It came out of a test model, basically. That's why it was a white cube. I suggested that we should move through the space and feel our own body in the space. And we could do it because it's virtual reality. We can exploit the perspective. We don't have to stay in the perspective of our body inside the museum. We can actually go into the Earth's crust and into outer space. I realized very quickly that I was able to actually create a simulation of more-than-human perspectives because we're not in real space. We can potentially be in places we wouldn't be able to be and have an experience of being alone in outer space or being caught in a web of mycelium. These are the types of physical experiences we're not able to have in real life.



Sophie Erlund: 'Nature is an event that never stops,' 2023, VR film experience at PSM Berlin // Courtesy of PSM Berlin

MC: Do you think that new digital technologies such as VR, which are often criticized as alienating us from our environment, have the power to bind us more closely to it?

SE: I think if it's used in a way that highlights exactly these types of topics—questioning who you are, questioning how you feel things, questioning how you see things—I think it does offer something.

Digital media as such can be very alienating, but I think it's important to highlight its presence in our lives because we are increasingly engaging with, not necessarily VR, but with algorithms and AI, which are deciding many things with us, and we're not always so actively engaged in the decisions, at least not in a conscious way. And so I think this is one of the big topics for us as humans now: to study our choices and study the agency that we do have, to become more conscious about our use of these technologies.



Sophie Erlund: 'Nature is an event that never stops,' 2023, installation view at PSM Berlin // Courtesy of PSM Berlin

MC: What was it like working on a project that is at once art and a psychology experiment?

SE: I think for many artists collaborating is a challenge, because we're not used to it. We are so privileged to just sit in our own world and do what we think is important or focus on what we want to express. But to suddenly work with scientists was a huge challenge, although a very meaningful learning experience.

A lot of the things I'm interested in—such as interaction with artworks and the effect on you as a visitor and this feeling that you're participating in the artwork, and that the way you move, the way you hear and where you're positioned all makes a difference in the experience of the artwork and what it tells you—I've considered for many years without knowing very much about what the brain or perception does or could do from a scientific point of view. Since having these discussions with the EER group and Cordula Vesper, I was able to get input that sharpened my lens on how I could use artworks to create those experiential spaces.

Exhibition Info

PSM

Sophie Erlund: 'Nature is an event that never stops'

Exhibition: Jan. 16-Feb. 25, 2023

www.psm-gallery.com

Schöneberger Ufer 61, 10785 Berlin, [click here for map](#)