

The Perennials

Jenn E Norton

ELLEPHANT

SEE plants, flowers and fungi interact in surprising ways in Jenn E Norton's augmented reality series 'The Perennials'. Irises gossip, roses embrace, daisies relax and fungi hang out in four entertaining anthropomorphic animations exposing the usually unseen and unheard communications that secretly take place all around us in the natural world.

The four AR works in the series, *Irises Listening*, *Eros' Kiss*, *Mycelium*, and *Daes eage*, playfully draw upon recent studies of the communicative behaviours of plants and fungi through sound and enzymes. Black and white symbols reminiscent of Art Nouveau design serve as fiducial markers, or targets, that allow visitors to experience the augmented reality content in specific locations using an iPad provided by the gallery. The animated content reveals anthropomorphic botanical characters that are constructed from elements of existing plant life. Themes of animism and the flow of information via phenomena that operate outside of human perception are

whimsically enacted within the interactions of the animated characters.

Irises Listening, features the meeting of three anthropomorphic irises whispering to one another, shielding the message shared within their counsel from the viewer with their cupped leaf-hands. Framed within a leaf wreath, and standing before a black background, the figures are comprised of 3D scans of an iris flower, stem, and ovaries.

Eros' Kiss speaks again to interspecies communication, drawing upon the allure of the blossom as the reproductive structure of the plant to attract pollinators, as well as the use of humans to communicate using the rose, wherein the message is dependent upon colour. Yet, there is another facet of *Eros' Kiss*. As roses encompass male and female organs in each flower, they are capable of self-pollinating, producing seeds that germinate into what many gardeners deem as underwhelming rose plants with smaller, less exuberant blossoms.

Mycelium offers an animated cross-section view of the symbiotic relationships operating above and below the earth's surface, where the world's largest living organisms, fungi, weave their expansive roots called mycelium beneath the forest floor. *Mycelium* plays an integral role in the health and nourishment of trees within an ecosystem.

The movement of plants and phototropism are also animated and personified in *Daes eage*. This augmented reality animation is named after the old

English term from which 'daisy' is believed to derive. *Daes eage*, translates to Days Eye, possibly descriptive of the way the daisy opens at dawn. *Daes eage* features several figures seemingly basking in an implied sun, some languidly, while others peer out of the augmented tableau, shielding their eyes from the glare, as though searching for the source of daylight.

Jenn E Norton is an artist using time-based media to create immersive, experiential installations that reframe familiar objects, landscapes, and activities as fantastical, dreamlike occurrences. Using stereoscopic, interactive video, animation, augmented reality, sound, and kinetic sculpture, Norton's installations explore the blurring boundaries of virtual and physical realms. Often using video as a starting point within her process, Norton's imaginative video compositions of disjunctive imagery are bound together in post-production, using a combination of pre-cinema and contemporary display technologies. Norton's recent animations and augmented reality apps draw upon her interest in the ways in which information is exchanged between humans, technology, or, as in her exhibition at ELLEPHANT, plants. Current areas of research within Norton's practice explore the use of metaphor in physics as both a conceptual genesis, communicative device, poetic practice, and demonstrative application of technological and natural phenomena.

