

Curator's Note + Artwork Description

CURATOR'S NOTE

FLORA FILE by Rick Silva

This exhibition borrows its name from William Gibson's first published short story, "Fragments of a Hologram Rose" (1977). As the story notes, when a hologram is cut into pieces, even the smallest section still contains the whole of the image. In a similar way, plant cuttings and an edition of digital works can both hold these mirroring elements of origin and multiplicity.

The artists featured in the exhibition were asked to imagine and create their own sci-fi plants, and to interpret this prompt however they like—whether it be by rendering an alien pollen, some photosynthetic architecture, or a flower whose weirdness is only revealed by its description. I invited these particular artists to this exhibition because their work already pointed towards these speculative notions of nature and time. They were also invited because of their experimental use, and creative misuse, of 3D modeling and animation. A 3D program's workspace is by default an infinite space, since as you navigate the viewport you are surrounded by a void on all sides—beyond which a sublime vastness awaits. In this way, the artists who choose to work in these programs are negotiating the infinite potentials of space and time whenever they start a new project.

Like botanists from a parallel future or an unknown world, these artists cultivate their fictions into existence. They sub-scatter seed pods, prune polygon cuttings, give their models plenty of volumetric lighting, and soak with fluid simulations. The 3D objects in this exhibition have secret pathways and telepathic tendrils. They bloom on neon skins and disperse nano mold spores through LCD screens. Like an ikebana of poisonous flowers in zero gravity, they hover in the expanse as a collection of fragmented flora files.

ARTWORK DESCRIPTION

A deeply adapted hybrid, *D. Flagellum* has characteristics similar to those of photosynthetic eukaryotic organisms on Earth. Classified as both flora and fauna, *D. Flagellum* might be best understood as an airborne plankta that is both photosynthetic and heterotrophic as it does consume other airborne organisms. It is notable for its unique adaptation which allows it to store compounds in a vacuole that can be accessed for growth when nutrients are unavailable in the environment. Between 20–200 micrometers in length, the organism is approximately the same size as the width of a human hair. Its morphology is characterized by its armored plates and its tendril-like flagella. The organism's chloroplast-containing horns are extensible, which allows it to increase its surface area for photosynthetic production using the light of the suns. *D. Flagellum* may reproduce sexually or asexually. Occasional blooms of the organism can account for planetary haze over the southern deserts where its population is most concentrated.

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