About the artists

Ghislan Sutherland-Timm is a craftsman based in Toronto. Their artistic practice is influenced by their ancestral ties and reconnection to their Afro-Caribbean heritage and Caribbean roots. Their work is also ignited by the ephemeral and facility of sound and film. In creating "incomplete complete" works, collage-making is frequently utilized within their practice to shape autobiographical-fictional narratives and subjects of ambiguous beings addressing identity, memory, and landmarking. This often reflects the intersections of Sutherland-Timm’s multicultural queer identity and unravels the mythologies and romanticization of home and homecoming.

Mehrnaz Abdoos is a Toronto-based multi-media artist and designer, specializing in the dynamic realm of interactive media. Her work is an exploration of innovative storytelling, brought to life through immersive experiences.

About the InterAccess Media Arts Prize

For over twenty years the InterAccess Media Arts Prize has been granted annually to a graduating student whose work exhibits excellence and innovation in new media practice. Participating colleges and universities are invited to nominate one graduating student to be considered for a solo exhibition in InterAccess’s gallery. Nominations are adjudicated by InterAccess’s Programming Committee, who select one nominee for an exhibition at InterAccess. All nominees receive a complimentary one-year studio membership to InterAccess.

InterAccess Media Arts Prize 2023 Exhibition
An essay by Furqan Mohamed

InterAccess
950 Dupont St., Unit 11
Toronto, Ontario M6H 1Z2
interaccess.org

Gallery Hours
Tuesday—Saturday
11AM—6PM
Admission is always free

Founded in 1983, InterAccess is a non-profit gallery, educational facility, production studio, festival, and registered charity dedicated to emerging practices in art and technology. Our programs support art forms that integrate technology, fostering and supporting the full cycle of art and artistic practice through education, production, and exhibition. InterAccess is regarded as a preeminent Canadian arts and technology centre.

January 17 – February 17, 2024
Nostalgia, the desire and yearning to return to a time, place, or people, can be hard to pinpoint. It can creep up on you, and artists Mehrnaz Abdoos and Ghislan Sutherland-Timm are counting on that. Time is a “pleated concept,” Ghislan says during a December afternoon conversation. The works of both these artists are concerned with memory and fragmentation—how do we know something that only appears in our understanding once we come across it? To live with an unclear sense but to remain curious, conscious that knowledge is out there waiting to be accessed, through touch, sight, sound, smell, taste, and experimentation.

Working with found film, repurposing materials and pieces that were once loved by someone else, for something else, tapping into them, locating someone else, for something else, repurposing materials and experimentation. When we come across a carousel. Not much else is there, and others play, which Mehrnaz notes to be one of the most criti-cal aspects of the exhibition. Using avatars and user-features, are also meant to be someone else, to step away from the past and the present, to step into her experience and engage in our imagination? What does that mean that we must now be activated.

For Mehrnaz, tapping into mapping requires working with the past, with what may be unknown to them at first, Ghislans is tapping into a kind of “critical storytelling” within Kaboos, and mapping onto the present. Thanks to immersive projections, players will be immersed in a world—a narrative— that feels like it could start bar-reling towards you at any moment. The fires in the game, more glaring and ominous than red, one of its most noteworthy features. The fires are biological, a symbol of life. A sliver of a body a fragment, a piece of water runs through the image is neutral, without human influence, or at least hope they can become that way (Paglan 2016). But this narrat-ive is personal. There are patches of poppies on the gray earth and mourning tulips native to Iran that have long been used to symbolize sleep, death, and peace, a contrast to the image. We assume the digital strokes and know a person is at the other end of the work, but the digital image appear different. We are present as the viewer. We are present as the artist as a baby. You are invited to step into her experience and reflect on your own. Mehrnaz is working to fill gaps, too, invoking emotions usually reserved for private, subconscious mo-ments.

Using avatars and usernames allows you to choose to be someone else, to step away from the past and the present, to step into her experience and engage in our imagination? What does that mean that we must now be activated. As our Zoom call ends, I remember the rattan magazine holder I bought second-hand, nestled beside my desk, filled with print media and post-cards. My parents were allowed by my prized finding, telling me that back home, in Somalia, they grew up with rattan every-where: in the living room and kitchenware. If I squint at the few family photos we have, faded over time, I can make out the distinct woven pattern on a basket or seat, sitting in a home decades behind and a time-zone ahead of me, that, for now, I can only return to in my dreams.

When I first viewed a work-through of Kaboos, I was immediately preoccupied with the eyeballs staring down at you as you maneuver yourself through. Mehrnaz admits to having a bit of an obsession with eyes, and during our con-versation, Ghislans crouched down to show her earlier work, paintings saturated with eyes. As she speaks, I think of Trevor Paglan, who opens his 2016 essay “Invisible Images” with his own fascination with eyeballs. When looking closely at the surface of oil paintings, you can see a ghost of the artist, a brushstroke andknow a person is at the other end of the work, but the digital image appear different. We are present as the viewer. We are present as the artist as a baby. You are invited to step into her experience and reflect on your own. Mehrnaz is working to fill gaps, too, invoking emotions usually reserved for private, subconscious mo-ments.

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