



***Dakota Gearhart: The Sextant of the Rose***  
February 29 - April 12, 2020

### **Exhibition Program**

**Sunday, March 29, 6:00pm**

Pixelated Petals: An evening with Eva Davidova, Mo Kong, and Cori Olinghouse

Through lecture, video and performance, the artists will unravel some of the conceptual threads within Gearhart's exhibition like environmental collapse, digital and material promiscuity, and embodied absurdity.

***Dakota Gearhart: The Sextant of the Rose*** investigates beauty as economic capital through the ubiquitous figure of the rose, speculating on whether the rose may have a hidden evolutionary agenda of its own. This exhibition, the artist's first solo presentation in New York, features a new series of video-sculptures that incorporate psychedelic videos as well as living (and dying) roses to create an immersive world that viewers can become submerged within.

For centuries, roses have been revered as symbols of youth, beauty, and purity—qualities taken to extremes in the contemporary world. This deeply ingrained notion not only upholds outmoded ideals of feminine sexuality but also intensifies the perception of luxury attached to the rose symbol in hierarchies of wealth and desire. The exhibition's title, *The Sextant of the Rose*, evokes the ancient tool of the sextant, used for celestial navigation, marking the artworks' attempt to reorient the viewer's perspective to that of this coveted perennial in order to better understand its point of view.

Informed by the artist's day job as a florist, *The Sextant of the Rose* is an installation that conjures an otherworldly setting where bouquets and videos reside together within a suite of sculptures coated with paper pulp. Embedded video animations launch the rose into motion and give it voice. The roses within the collage-like videos spin, flicker, and accumulate, sometimes accompanied by paper-pulp figures or fragments of the artist's body.

In a central video work, Gearhart communicates with the rare and costly Juliet rose, who reveals her strategy of using sensuality to co-opt human desire as a way to navigate her own specie's evolution. Over hundreds of years, humans have cultivated roses to have more desirable patterns, better scents, more saturated colors, and even a more graceful death. By asking the rose what it experiences from its revered cultural position, Gearhart seeks to further understand how roses are using human desire to evolve and procreate, and to what extent we are entranced into performing their desires.

*The Sextant of the Rose* continues Gearhart's work across video, sculpture, and multimedia installation to create strange speculative environments that attend to the emotions, desires, and activities of other species. For instance, *Relief From Cold-Blooded Pregnant Anxiety* (2017) is a video made to comfort pregnant alligators, while *Jury-Rigged Fly Traps* (2016) is a sculpture that, ironically, offers a last meal for flies. In collapsing digital space with floral animism, Gearhart ultimately poses larger questions about the struggles related to possession and power between humans and other beings, and offers scenarios for more equitable, intimate, and creative multispecies interdependency.

Organized by Alexis Wilkinson, Knockdown Center Director of Exhibitions and Live Art

## **About the Artist**

Dakota Gearhart is a multidisciplinary artist who examines the environment and how it is perceived through technology and mythology. Her work has been exhibited at The Bronx Museum of Art, Bronx, NY; Tacoma Art Museum, Tacoma, WA; Disjecta Contemporary Art Center, Portland, OR; Equity Gallery, New York, NY; On The Ground Floor, Los Angeles, CA; Horse Hospital, London, UK; Griessmuehle, Berlin, GR; Lab'Attoir, Thessaloniki, Greece; and Taiyuan University, Taiyuan, China. She has been awarded the Puffin Foundation Grant, Artist Trust GAP Grant, BRIC Digital Media Fellowship, and a National Endowments for the Arts Fellowship through a partnership with Residency Unlimited. Residencies completed include the Queens Museum Studio Program, NY; NARS Foundation, NY; Studios at MASS MoCa, MA; Wassiac Project, NY; Residency Unlimited, NY; and The Bronx Museum AIM Program, NY. Currently, she is a video educator with Pioneer Works and Educational Video Center, both in Brooklyn, NY.

## **About Knockdown Center**

Knockdown Center gallery hours are Thursday and Friday from 5 PM to 9 PM, Saturday and Sunday from 2 PM to 8 PM. Knockdown Center is located at 52-19 Flushing Ave, Maspeth, NY 11378