

SciArt in America

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CITY SIGHTS: Apexart

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CITY SIGHTS: Finding the science-art in New York area art exhibitions

By Julia Buntaine, Editor-in-Chief

apexart

New York, NY

"Space Between the Skies," a group exhibition organized by Christopher Manzione, featuring the work of Seth Cluett, John Craig Freeman, Ricky Graham, Christopher Manzione, Nicholas O'Brien, and Rachel Rossin

March 23 through May 14, 2016



Welcome to apexart. Please stand in line.

As a regular art goer in NYC, apexart's current exhibit "Space Between the Skies" diverges wonderfully from the typical gallery show in more ways than one. With the majority of pieces seen only through virtual reality headsets, or VR, the experience of the show begins with waiting in line, as if at an amusement park. Passing the time in line tweeting, taking pictures, sipping your wine, and talking to other gallery goers you stand idly, and anticipation grows.



Unlike an amusement park ride, however, this ride is a ride for one, and is one you've never seen before. Bringing a new meaning to the idea of an individualized viewing experience, "Space Between the Skies" forces a solitary experience while promoting a communal discussion post-view. Paying homage to the long-time art tradition of landscape painting, this exhibit explores the potential of virtual landscapes.



When one experiences VR art often, as it does at this exhibit, involves putting on headphones, putting on a VR headset, and holding a joystick type device that when used allows you to 'move around' in the VR world. It is a testament to the work when even those who are the most self-conscious (I count myself among them) can lose themselves in the reality they are temporarily and virtually immersed in, turning around in circles and craning necks to fully explore the secret world. Because of the few-at-a-time experience of the art, those viewing the VR art become performers for their duration, enacting the bodily movements their eyes compel.

Christopher Manzione, the organizer of this exhibit and one of its participants, laughed as he related to me that his piece (a collaboration with Seth Cluett and Ricky Graham) was a sort of exploration through a 'glitchy woods', saying he had spend a lot of time in the deep New Jersey woods to get the footage which the VR program was based on. I had the chance to 'explore' these woods during the opening reception, and took my time 'walking' around, traveling through the ghost-like trees. I was drawn to a dark spot, on the horizon, and traveled towards it. Whereas the trees were bright, the dark spot held a lake, and I stopped at its shore. My fear of large bodies of water kicked in and I turned around, running back into the light.



VR art is a new art form. With headsets hanging by thick electrical cables from the high ceilings and the walls mostly blank, this exhibit felt like something entirely new. Additionally, since not much VR art has been done, these works enjoy the benefit of not being compared to any forefathers - contemporary VR artists are the pioneers. It is for this reason that if you're in the New York area you should go see this show. See the pioneer works of what will certainly be an everyday art experience in ten years or less.

apexart Gallery is located at 291 Church Street in Manhattan.
 Visit apexart's website at <http://apexart.org/>

All images courtesy of Julia Buntaine

<http://www.sciartinamerica.com/blog/city-sights-apexart>