

# Wet Signal Voice Gardens Accessible Audio Transcript

0:00 Speaker

Kari Robertson, *Wet Signal Voice Gardens*, 18 February - 12 May 2020. *Wet Signal Voice Gardens* is an online landscape built as a tool to explore the many aspects of the human voice. Its non-linguistic properties and its position in the digital world is brought to UP Projects by evidence-based artist, Kari Robertson. *Wet Signal Voice Gardens* invites international participation to explore how hierarchies of value present in the offline world might persist or could be subverted online. In highlighting which voices are ordinarily more and less able to traverse and communicate with digital space, *Wet Signal Voice Gardens* subverts the prejudices of the offline world, and in so doing, attempts to create an inclusive space. In her research for the project, Robertson examined how dominant technology such as Alexa or Google Assistant promote a sense of vocal perfection, leaving no room for the many deviations of the embodied human voice. The artist states, "typical vocal avatars such as Siri are absence of speech defects, such as stutters, or slips of the tongue, do not get laryngitis, toothache or social anxiety. Therefore, they almost always resemble impossibly able-bodied members of society, with highly limited representation of age, race, accent, physical disability, or neurodiversity." *Wet Signal Voice Gardens* is a virtual landscape where audiences are invited to speak into the microphone built into their laptop or smartphones. The audience contribution is recorded, and the sound is transferred by Flask and P5JS software into a visual avatar. The form and visual characteristics of these avatars are determined by attributes of the voice such as pitch, length, nuance, and volume. The artwork then creates an online visual representation of diverse voices, and in so doing, performs a potential counterpoint to the typical seamless smoothness of the digital voice. *Wet Signal Voice Gardens* relies on varied audio properties in order to playfully critique and subvert rather than replicate established power relations. Robertson's art work seeks to highlight forms of vocal prejudice that exist on an offline and open space for other forms of relation beyond the divisions of language, dialect, and ableism. Click on the image to record your voice and create your own personalised avatar. The voice plays an important role in the offline world. It can establish power dynamics or uphold existing power structures that shape societies and outlooks. Recent research by Casey A. Klofstad, Rindy C. Anderson and Susan Peters (of the University of Miami and Duke University respectively), demonstrated that while higher pitched female speakers are perceived as more attractive, both men and women find low with pitch female voices to be more competent. The ability to link visual imagery to verbal speech has been shown to enhance reading and listening comprehension. It also helps cement understanding of the meaning of the words in the user's memory and is a technique used when teaching very small children how to read and speak. By highlighting prejudice, difference, and the non-linguistic properties of vocalisation, Robertson's artwork provides a gateway for new learning and comprehension, as well as the unlearning of pre-existing personal biases. Biography. Kari Robertson was born in 1988 in Scotland, and is a visual artist

who lives and works in Rotterdam. Robeson works with time based media, primarily sound, analogue film and digital video. She received an MA in Fine Art from The Piet Zwart Institute in 2016, and undertook a residency at Deltaworkers New Orleans through the Mondriaan Fund in 2019. Selected exhibitions include; Showroom MAMA in Rotterdam, The ICA in Singapore, The Banff Centre in Canada, Radiophrenia in Glasgow, Killjoy Collective in Portland, Oregon, The Showroom in London, The Centre for Contemporary Arts in Glasgow, TENT, Rotterdam, Flat Time House in London, LUX Scotland, and Transmission Gallery, Glasgow. In her work Kari takes a 'sci-fi' approach to subjectivity, using narrative as a tool to re/un-think the sovereignty of our bodies, identities or minds, and as a means to access forms of 'radical empathy' (what it might be to empathize beyond the familial bonds of identity, similarity or equivalence). She playfully explores how post-digital constructions and distributions of the subject impact on what we consider explicitly 'personal' or 'subjective'. Kari currently co-runs GHOST with Madison Bycroft and Natalia Sorzano. This is a nomadic, curatorial project who programme bi-monthly screenings at WORM Cinema in Rotterdam and monthly reading group Improvisation, Policing and Opacity at Tender Centre in Rotterdam. GHOST has recently programmed exhibitions at Galerie HLM in Marseille, Microscope Gallery in New York and MIAMI in Bogota.