**QUEER CROWD SIMULATION VIDEOGAME ABOUT GARDENING MAKES ITS WORLD PREMIERE AT MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL**

**Known for his homoerotic videogames,** **Robert Yang presents the world premiere of his *Virtual Factory* project *We Dwell in Possibility*** **on 1 July** **at Manchester International Festival 2021, created in collaboration with world-renowned illustrator Eleanor Davis.**

For *Virtual Factory*, Manchester International Festival (MIF) has invited some of the world’s most exciting artists from the worlds of gaming, film and visual art to create online artworks in response to the architecture and artistic ambition of The Factory – the landmark cultural space that will be MIF’s future home.

For the third project in the series, premiering during MIF21 (1-18 July), videogame designer and radical virtual architect **Robert Yang,** known for his explicit 3D realismgames about gay culture,has created a queer online gardening simulation called *We Dwell in Possibility* in collaboration with world-famous cartoonist and illustrator **Eleanor Davis.**

Scored by Manchester-based experimental electronic music producer **aya**, *We Dwell in Possibility* is Robert’s most collaborative project to date and marks a shift from Robert’s previous works, both in playability, as a free-to-play browser-based experience, and in visual style, from 3D realism to 2D illustration.

Robert’s work has always questioned who is represented and who is excluded from virtual spaces and the politics of digital architectures. For *We Dwell in Possibility*, Robert and collaborators subvert the heteronormative crowd simulations used by architects and city planners to create their own improvised landscape. This free online experience invites the player to plant suggestively shaped objects, flowers and trees amongst an interactive crowd of naked simulated AI characters - illustrated with randomly generated sexual body parts.

Designed for gamers and non-gamers alike, *We Dwell in Possibility* can be played as an active or passive gaming experience that is not about ‘winning’ but playing with dynamic systems, provocative objects and virtual space.

Robert Yang said, *“Like my previous works, We Dwell in Possibility is all about queer bodies and sex, but for this project I also wanted to respond to a lack of politics in crowd simulation art and to create an artwork that is rooted in a specific historical moment.* *From this simple model of politics, sexuality, and architecture, the simulation improvises a new landscape, a virtual heaven or hell, or more likely something both at once -- a society.”*

**Gabrielle Jenks**, Digital Director at Manchester International Festival said, *“**We Dwell in Possibility poses an obvious truth, that cities and communities are not programmable or subject to rational order. Given Robert’s architectural pedigree and interest in the built environment he was the perfect artist to work on the Virtual Factory programme. Robert and Eleanor call for new models of engagement, one which involves humour, improvisation and gardening – this is a society which plants bodies and ideas.”*

MIF began developing Virtual Factory in 2019, as part of its pre-Factory programme on the journey towards The Factory, where artists are encouraged to create radical and interdisciplinary work that maximises the boundless potential of the highly flexible spaces within the building and the expanding digital spaces beyond its physical structure. Previous *Virtual Factory* projects include *The Neon Hieroglyph* created by Turner Prize winner Tai Shani and *Your Progress Will Be Saved* created by avatar artist LaTurbo Avedon in the Gaming platform Fortnite which has been visited by more than 1.5 million people.

Subsequent *Virtual Factory* commissions will be released over the next year, including a new project by the British-Nigerian artist and director **Jenn Nkiru**, whose global reputation was cemented by her work on Beyoncé and Jay-Z’s *Apeshit* video

*We Dwell in Possibility* is playable at virtual-factory.co.uk from Thursday 1 July.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, IMAGES, QUOTES AND INTERVIEW REQUESTS PLEASE CONTACT:**

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Download high resolution images [here](https://mif.co.uk/about/press/press-media-library/MIF21-media-library/we-dwell-in-possibility-robert-yang/)

**Robert Yang (杨若波)** is a game developer and professor of video games in New York City. Robert Yang makes surprisingly popular games about gay culture and intimacy -- he is most known for his historical bathroom sex simulator The Tearoom and his male shower simulator Rinse and Repeat, and his gay sex triptych Radiator 2 has over 150,000 users on Steam. He is currently an Assistant Arts Professor at NYU Game Center, and he has given talks at GDC, IndieCade, Queerness and Games Conference, and Games for Change. He holds a BA in English Literature from UC Berkeley, and an MFA in Design and Technology from Parsons School for Design.

**Eleanor Davis** is a cartoonist and illustrator. Her books include *How To Be Happy* (2014), *You and a Bike and a Road* (2017), and *Why Art?* (2018). Her latest graphic novel, *The Hard Tomorrow* (2019), won the LA Times Book Prize for Graphic Novels and Comics.

**The Factory**

The Factory is a new world-class cultural space currently being built in the heart of Manchester, UK. Inspired by the city’s unmatched history of innovation, it will be the year-round home of Manchester International Festival – a space for the world’s greatest artists and thinkers to make, explore and experiment, and for communities and individuals from Manchester and beyond to meet, exchange ideas and learn new skills.

The Factory is designed by Rem Koolhaas’s OMA, with Ellen van Loon as Lead Architect, and backed by Manchester City Council, HM Government and Arts Council England.

**Digital at The Factory**

The Virtual Factory commissions look forward to the Factory as the pioneering new home of digital culture in the North West and build on MIF’s record for commissioning innovative digital work, including Björk’s Biophilia app (MIF11), Ed Atkins’ Performance Capture (MIF15) and Laurie Anderson and Hsin-Chien Huang’s To the Moon (MIF19). MIF has also commissioned two games, which are available for free: Songs of the Lost by Paloma Dawkins featuring music by Jlin (MIF19), and Nina Freeman’s Lost Memories Dot Net (MIF17).

**About Manchester International Festival**

Manchester International Festival (MIF) is an artist-led festival of original, new work and special events reflecting the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts and popular culture. MIF21 takes place from 1 - 18 July 2021.

Staged every two years in Manchester, MIF has commissioned, produced and presented world premieres by artists including Marina Abramović, Damon Albarn, Laurie Anderson, Björk, Boris Charmatz, Jeremy Deller, Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah, Elbow, Philip Glass and Phelim McDermott, David Lynch, Wayne McGregor, Steve McQueen, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Yoko Ono, Thomas Ostermeier, Maxine Peake, Punchdrunk, Skepta, The xx, Robert Wilson and Zaha Hadid Architects.

These and other world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work, staged in venues across Greater Manchester – from theatres, galleries and concert halls to railway depots, churches and car parks. MIF works closely with venues, festivals and other cultural organisations globally, whose financial and creative input helps to make many of these projects possible and ensures that work made at MIF goes on to be seen around the world.

MIF supports a year-round Creative Engagement programme, bringing opportunities for people from all backgrounds, ages and from all corners of the city to get involved during the Festival and year-round, as volunteers, as participants in shows, through skills development and a host of creative activities, such as Festival in My House.

MIF will also run The Factory, the new landmark cultural space currently being built in the heart of Manchester and designed by the internationally-renowned architect Ellen van Loon of Rem Koolhaas’ OMA. The Factory will commission, present and produce one of Europe’s most ambitious and adventurous year-round creative programmes, featuring bold new work from the world’s greatest artists and offering a space to create, invent and play.

Attracting up to 850,000 visitors annually, The Factory will add up to £1.1 billion to the economy over a decade and create up to 1,500 direct and indirect jobs. Its pioneering programme of skills, training and engagement will benefit local people and the next generation of creative talent from across the city, whilst apprenticeships and trainee schemes are already underway during the construction phase.

MIF’s Artistic Director and Chief Executive is John McGrath.

[mif.co.uk](https://mif.co.uk)