

Molior: an exhibition producer in arts, sciences, and technologies

Aurélie Besson

Affiliation (s) Molior

Montreal Canada

aurelie.besson@molior.ca

Abstract

Molior is an organization specialized in the production of exhibitions and artistic projects which make use of technologies as a creation, expression, and action tool.

Since its foundation in 2001, Molior has presented numerous innovative projects in Canada as well as on the international scene in collaboration with multiple dissemination partners.

Molior also carries out various activities outside of established networks in order to stimulate audience development and foster access to high quality productions.

A pioneer in Canada, since its founding in 2001, the organization has produced 70 projects in Canada, China, Brazil, Peru, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Switzerland, Portugal, and France, presenting the work of more than 130 Canadian and international artists and curators. Molior's partners are national museums, triennials, festivals, and large-scale artistic events that recognize its expertise in media and digital art and the quality of our exhibitions, which generate large audiences.

Keywords

Art and sciences collaboration; Curatorship; Exhibitions; art and ecology; art, perceptions and experiences; Interactions; Sustainability; Virtual environments; Site-specific art; Collaborative Approaches; Participatory Art; Interdisciplinary Exploration.

Abstract

Molior is an organization based in Montreal specialized in the production of large-scale international exhibitions and art projects at the intersection of arts, sciences and technologies.



Figure 1 Facade of the National Art Museum of China. Molior was a partner at the International Triennale of New Media arts.



Figure 2 Exhibition in Montreal "New Surroundings: Approaching the Untouchable" credits: Rémi Hermoso

Molior carries out various types of projects:

- Showcases of Canadian digital art at major, widely attended events (the *International Media Art Triennial* in China, *Nuits blanches*, festivals, events in public spaces, etc.). To obtain a proposal of Canadian works that is representative of our cultural diversity while also respecting the partner's own guidelines, the selection of works is established jointly by the artistic direction of the foreign partner and our artistic committee.
- Large-scale national and international exhibitions based on compelling concepts. These projects are developed by national and international curators and are presented in institutions abroad. Our partners are museums, galleries, or cultural institutions. These exhibitions bring together existing works by Canadian and international artists or works that Molior co-produces in situ with the partner. These works create a dialogue between various practices in an innovative conceptual and formal articulation.
- International networking residencies for curators to build connections and collaborations between Canadian and international professionals, as well as to promote the visibility of local actors abroad.
- Reflection and sharing activities such as conferences, events, or colloquia to advance practices and questions around digital arts.

In recent years, Molior has delved into various approaches at the intersection of art and science practices. It involves the development of culturally safe virtual spaces, online collaborative reflexive workshops, exhibitions in virtual reality and the exploration of digital museology and new approaches to presenting works and exhibitions. Several of these approaches were explored in the following projects:

New Surroundings: Approaching the Untouchable (exhibition) (2023-)

Molior produced a virtual reality exhibition curated by Nathalie Bachand showcasing the works of Baron Lantaigne, Caroline Gagné, François Quévillon, Laurent Lévesque & Olivier Henley, Olivia McGilchrist, and Sabrina Ratté. The exhibition explores the materiality of nature through an investigation of digital matter. The entire virtual reality exhibition can be experienced seamlessly using a single headset. A specially created virtual space for the project features six dedicated portals, each leading to one of the six artworks. It was presented in Montreal as a world premiere and will start soon its international circulation.

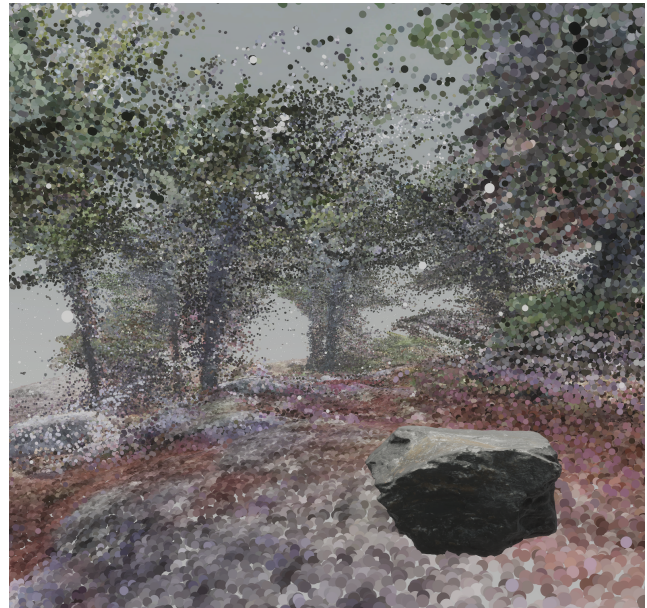


Figure 3 *Autofading_Se disparaître* (2020) from Caroline Gagné. One of the six VR artworks of New Surroundings.

Rethinking our Futures: Art and Collaboration (symposium) (2021)

In 2021, the organization hosted a significant international symposium on collaborative curatorial practices in the digital age, which took place entirely online. This event served as a reflection laboratory. Presentations and conversations with international experts were conducted and are still available online. Through collaborative methods a cohort of fifteen curators exchanged ideas and worked together during six online workshops. A publication was produced, allowing the cohort to share feedback from their experience and enabling artists to create new online works.

Dead Web – The End (exhibition) (2018 -)

Molior organized the international circulation of this exhibition, curated by Nathalie Bachand. Its first iteration took place in 2019 at the Mirage festival in Lyon. Subsequently, it was presented at the Mapping festival in Geneva, providing a great opportunity to showcase Swiss artists. In 2020, the exhibition was co-produced with the Ludwig Museum in Budapest, Hungary. This collaboration allowed for the inclusion of works from the museum's collection and the invitation of contemporary Hungarian artists to participate in the show. This large-scale exhibition evolved through every collaboration and with each context.

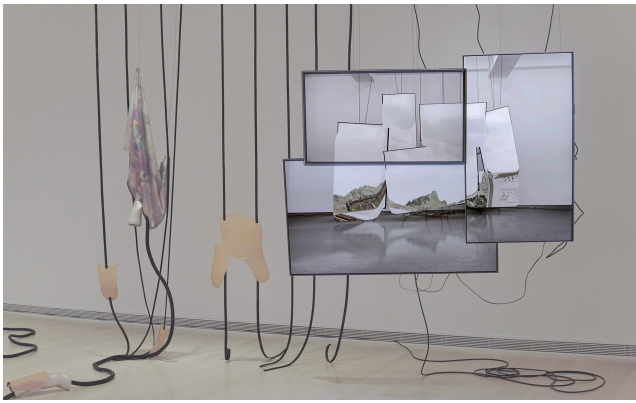


Figure 4 "In Extremis" from Dominique Sirois & Baron Lanteigne (2019). Produced by Molior. Credits: Baron Lanteigne.

Biela Noc Kosice, Biela Noc Bratislava, Slovakia and Signal festival in Prague, Czech Republic (2017)

In each of these three major events, Molior co-produced the presentation of several large-scale works involving light in public spaces and throughout their city. Artworks by Diane Landry, Maotik and Robyn Moody were presented as part of the two Slovakian Nuit Blanche events. Robyn Moody's work continued to tour for three days of exhibition at the Signal Festival. Throughout each presentation, the works

Author(s) Biography(ies)

Since 2016, Aurélie Besson has been the Executive and Artistic Director of Molior. She has developed collaborative projects in China, Brazil, Mexico, France, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Switzerland and Canada. For more than 15 years, she has directed interdisciplinary projects in art, science and technology, alternately as a researcher, curator, artistic director or manager.

In 2023, she obtained a PhD in Study and practice of the arts at the Université du Québec à Montréal, co-supervised by Louise Poissant and Victor Frak. Her research has been developed according to a transdisciplinary approach in which she explores the concepts of enaction and the kinaesthetic senses in the experience of practicable works. She has organized a dozen conferences and has been involved in several research groups with Montreal universities. She also coordinated the production of the book *Lumières de la ville* (PUQ), edited by Louise Poissant, and has published several articles on the digital arts in books, blogs and magazines. Aurélie is regularly invited to conferences and sits on numerous committees and juries that recognize her expertise.

were enriched by engaging in a dialogue with the heritage buildings and their context.

ÉVEIL/ALIVE (exhibition) – SESC SANTANA, São Paulo, Brazil (2014)

In 2014, Sylvie Parent curated the *Alive* exhibition, co-produced with Molior, SESC SP, and Automatica. Focused on kinetic and robotic works, the exhibition explored concepts related to the living and behavioral properties. These non-anthropomorphic works' organic movements created the impression of being alive. Additionally, a new piece by Chico McMurtrie was produced.

In Molior's exhibitions it is crucial that the works are rooted in singular artistic research, disrupting established codes, advocating for a renewal of language, and critically addressing contemporary issues. Molior's exhibitions prompt powerful experiences engaging the senses and stimulating thought among viewers.

Between 2007 and 2010, she directed European collaborative art and technology projects and events in Prague. She holds a MA degree in communication (Université de Lyon 2; Universiteit Utrecht) and a MA degree in cultural development and project management (Université de Lyon 2). She teaches a course on Arts and technologies: foundations and challenges at Université de Sherbrooke.