

**ALANA
BARTOL
AND
BRYCE
KRYNSKI**

**all roses sleep
(inviolable light)**

**ALANA
BARTOL
AND
BRYCE
KRYNSKI**
**all roses sleep
(inviolable light)**

Art Gallery of Alberta
June 18 - October 2, 2022

un(bee)mo


vi
n(in)g
are(th
e)you(o
nly)

asl(rose)eep

-E.E. Cummings¹

Bees experience the world around them through scent, touch, and vision on the ultraviolet spectrum. *all roses sleep (inviolate light)* opens on a solitary bee asleep in a blazing star. The bee is native to this part of the world, as is the plant. Blazing stars send out blooms atop a long slender spike that appears in late summer and feeds bees from August until the first frost. This plant is not particularly fragrant to humans, but its smell and showy flower cluster are very attractive to bees. The slight smell of the flower is sweet and creamy with a hint of the richness of vanilla. The leaves of the plant can have a spicy, piney scent. Like the E.E. Cummings poem above, one hopes that this solitary bee is only resting. Bees do not only navigate to food sources through their sense of smell, but they also communicate with it. When bees are in distress, they send out a pheromone to communicate danger to others. To humans, this pheromone smells like bananas.² If one could smell this bee, would it smell like bananas? And if it did, would we be empathic enough to recognize it as a cry for help?

The exact number of native bee species in Alberta is unknown but to date 322 species have been documented. Because of a lack of research on native bee populations, we do not know the exact number of species, nor which are endangered or at risk.³ Although honeybees are easily recognizable and their support encouraged, they are an introduced species that is native to Europe. Most of Alberta's native bees do not have distinctive yellow and black stripes; most are also solitary or live in small colonies compared to the large familiar hives of honeybees. 70% of native bees are like the protagonist bee in the film and live alone in small holes in the earth. It has become common knowledge that

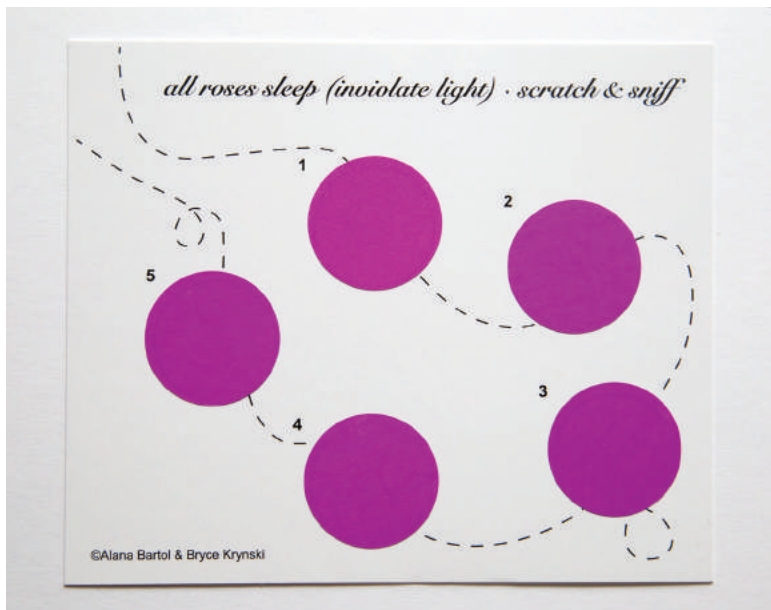


Alana Bartol and Bryce Krynski,
all roses sleep (inviolata light),
2022. Video still. Courtesy of
the Artists.

still woozy from s

A close-up photograph of a bee on a pink flower. The bee is positioned on the left side of the frame, facing right. The flower has many thin, pink petals. In the background, there is another similar flower and some green foliage. A prominent lens flare is visible in the upper center of the image. The overall lighting is soft and warm.

smoke-filled skies



Alana Bartol and Bryce Krynski, *all roses sleep (inviolata light)*, 2022. Scratch and sniff card. Courtesy of the Artists.

the loss of pollinators will result in a total collapse of agricultural food production and therefore human survival, but what is less recognized is the importance of and the threats to native bee populations. All pollination is not good pollination. Native bees have coevolved with native plants and selectively take pollen from them, therefore supporting prairie grasslands. At best, introduced honeybees pollinate indiscriminately, at worst they pollinate plants originating from their native Europe, encouraging the spread of invasive plant species.⁴

The native bee in *all roses sleep (inviolat light)* is in search of a wild rose in the Pinhorn Grazing Reserve, near Milk River in Southern Alberta. This reserve of public land is about 75,000 acres and was established in 1961. It is one of 32 community pastures found throughout Alberta. The primary purpose of provincial grazing reserves is to provide farmers and ranchers with summer pasture for their livestock. This allows farmers and ranchers to grow cash crops on their own land in the summer while their cattle are on public land. Grazing reserves have been set up on land that has been deemed unsuitable for agricultural farming. The primary purpose of this land is for grazing but it is also used for recreational activities like hunting, hiking and snowmobiling; oil and gas and gravel hauling companies also make use of the provincial reserves. Even with these competing demands on the land, the Pinhorn Reserve is one of the largest tracts of intact native prairie left in Alberta.⁵

Throughout the film, numbers appear on screen that direct viewers to a corresponding scent on a scratch and sniff card. The smells expand our experience of the bee's journey beyond just the visual. Smell is often dismissed among the human senses. When theorist Immanuel Kant posed the question "to which organic sense do we owe the least and which seems to be the most dispensable?" his answer was "the sense of smell."⁶ Although we are socialized to dismiss our sense of smell, we use it constantly to know and safely navigate the world around us. Humans can differentiate between at least a trillion different odours.⁷ To put that in perspective, the human eye can differentiate between only a couple million colours and the ear, a mere half-million tones.⁸

The first scent that viewers share with the bee is a gassy smell encountered around an abandoned gas well in the middle of the prairie. In advocating for the complete dismissal of scent as an aesthetic experience, Kant believed that the sense of smell was dispensable because of our abilities to smell pungent or abject odours. He believed, "it does not pay us to cultivate or refine it in order to gain enjoyment; this sense can pick up more objects of aversion than of pleasure."⁹ Alana Bartol, Bryce Krynski and I would, of course, disagree. Not only has our ability to smell unpleasant odours evolved to keep us safe and healthy, but there is also value to be had and knowledge to be gained by engaging with smells that might be "unpleasant." There is a further argument to be made that no smells are inherently bad or good but that these signifiers are cultural, experiential and emotional constructions.



Bartol working in the studio creating the bee's legs and tongue. Courtesy of the Artists.

Throughout the film, the bee observes and is observed by the cows that graze on the Pinhorn Reserve. I think cow manure has a pleasant unpleasantness. To me, it is nostalgic and reminds me of growing up in a rural community. The cows regard the bee (as well as the artists and, in turn, viewers) with an uncertain curiosity. One of the cows directly confronts the camera, setting up a curious relationship between bees and livestock. Many native bee conservationists describe the honeybee as livestock and like a herd of cows. These agricultural bees are often transported to various fields and public wildlands to both pollinate commercial crops and supplement their diets with native plants.¹⁰ On the prairies, the maintenance of honeybees has been deemed critical for canola cultivation. The Government of Canada estimates that the combined value of honeybees and canola production is upwards of 5.5 billion dollars a year.¹¹ The value placed on these coexisting industries elucidates to some degree why such little importance is placed on both native bees and native plants.



Krynski filming a flying sequence at Pinhorn Grazing Reserve. Courtesy of the Artists.

The 4th scent that viewers encounter with the bee is sagebrush. The sage plant is used by humans for many things. It is used for physical and emotional healing in many preparations and has culinary uses. Sage is a very fragrant plant that smells sweet and green and smooth. The plant blooms in late summer providing nutrition for bees late in the season and helping them prepare for winter. The heat from the late summer sun accentuates its smell. Ultimately the bee does find and smell the rose that it searches for throughout the film. It is unclear, however, if the bee finds the rose in its dreams or while awake. Is the bee really sleeping? If so, how do bees dream? Perhaps what we are seeing is the bee's life flash before its eyes and nose before its death? Can we smell in the afterlife or our dreams? Olfactory artist Sissel Tolaas asserts, "We breath up to 24,000 times a day and move 12.5 cubic meters of air. With every breath we take, smell molecules flow through our bodies. Even when we sleep we smell."¹² Whether asleep or awake, the wild rose is fresh and crisp; it is regal and otherworldly and familiar. The scent of wild rose is elusive and short-lasting. It is slightly apple-like and fruity but rounded out with a soft spiciness

that is very near to the scent of cloves. In the video, the rose is glowing violet, seemingly lit up by searchlights.

The film is shot on a UV-converted digital camera that allows a portion of the ultraviolet spectrum to become visible to humans. Rather than seeing the world as combinations of red, blue and green as humans do, bees' vision is based in ultraviolet light, blue and green.¹³ When flowers are illuminated with UV light, hidden patterns in them are revealed. Many flowers have a glowing bullseye or stripes that point bees to the pollen at the centre of blossoms. Bartol and Krynski filmed the UV footage for *all roses sleep (inviolata light)* in the summer of 2021. Like most recent Alberta summers, the skies were thick and choked with smoke. This heavy smoke cover frustrated filming and limited the hours in the day that the artists could capture footage in the UV spectrum. What was revealed was that, even on a relatively bright day, smoke blocks many UV rays from reaching prairie wildflowers and, one could assume, hinders bee sight. In addition to depleting prairie, invasive plants and increased competition from honeybees, the sight and smell of native bee populations are presumably hindered by late summer wildfires—the most pivotal time for native bees to gather nutrients as they prepare for winter.

One of Bartol and Krynski's artistic inspirations is the 1981 John Waters film *Polyester*. *Polyester* tells the story of a mid-west housewife, Francine, played by Divine. Francine navigates her troubled upper-middle-class life through her extraordinary sense of smell. Waters created what he called an Odorama for the film, a scratch-and-sniff card with 10 unique scents that are scratched throughout the film. The smells, like Bartol and Krynski's, range from pleasant to effluvious. Both of these projects have an interest in blurring pleasant/unpleasant and attraction/repulsion as it relates to olfaction. Interestingly, the two films also share some scents; both use the scent of rose and the scent of natural gas.

While *Polyester* is meant to be an over-the-top satire, *all roses sleep (inviolata light)* embraces a subtler humour. The inclusion of the scent of cow manure while the bee searches for its own food is a subtle jab at humans' consumption of an excess of meat. As the bee's food sources are some of the most beautiful and coveted fragrances in the world, it likely would be ridiculous for the bee to imagine these pungent creatures it encounters in the fields as enticing or



Alana Bartol and Bryce Krynski, *all roses sleep (inviolata light)*, 2022. Video still. Courtesy of the Artists.

delicious. The props used for the bee's antennae, arms and tongue also have a low craft and humorous element as they are manipulated periodically around the edges of the film. Not purely for comedic effect, the antennae present another way to know the world around you; bees use their antennae to navigate and communicate by touch.

While John Waters' use of scent in *Polyester* can be seen as gimmicky or kitschy, Bartol and Krynski's interest in and inclusion of scent is central to the conception of the work. Smell is visceral, it allows us to move beyond the visual by using our limbic system to bypass our typical ways of perceiving the world. While filming, the artists were struck by the smells in the landscape that stood out to them, which were not always flowers and plants but rather what humans have imposed on the landscape—oil and gas, and cattle. This work was developed in concert with research on the history of the destruction and fragmentation of native prairie grasslands and the history of white settler colonization in the prairies. There has been an olfactory colonization of this

part of the world, along with all the other types of colonization imposed and enforced here. Colonial activity has changed how our world smells not only through the loss of native plants and the forced change of landscapes but as a reaction to climate change. Biogenic volatile organic compounds (BVOCs) smell and are how plants communicate. As CO₂ concentrations increase in our atmosphere and temperatures rise, plants react by producing more BVOCs.¹⁴ This olfactory noise will, among other things, continue to change smellscapes all over the world and necessitate a change in how all animals and insects who use those compounds can live.

The scents, in concert with the UV film, scratch at the edges of default human interactions with the world. *all roses sleep (inviolate light)* shows that there are many ways to experience the world around us and encourages viewers and smellers to try to imagine what it is like to see the world from a non-human perspective. Our shared futures are interdependent and it is vital to begin to smell the world in different ways. Engaging the sense of smell offers new ways to perceive realities and interact with our world. If we can begin to cultivate empathy and imagine how other beings smell, see and touch their world, we could start to understand one another and even collectively dream of better futures.

Endnotes

- 1 This poem plays with the way we read, and you are meant to read the words in brackets first. E.E. Cummings, “un(bee)mo,” (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1958).
- 2 Dylan Voeller and James Nieh, “Analysis of Honeybee Aggression,” UC San Diego, Accessed April 8, 2022, http://labs.biology.ucsd.edu/nieh/TeachingBee/honeybee_aggression.htm.
- 3 Joanna Skrajny, “The Buzz about Native Bees,” *Wildlands Advocate* 28, no.1 (March 2020): 9-11.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 “Alberta ESRD Website Documentation on Provincial Grazing Reserves,” Alberta Wilderness Association, last modified January 14, 2008, https://albertawilderness.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/20131104_notes_AB_grazing_reserves.pdf.
- 6 Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (Leipzig, 1833), 53, quoted in David Howes, “Nose-wise: olfactory metaphors in mind,” in *Olfaction, Taste and Cognition*, ed. Catherine Rouby et al. (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 67.
- 7 C. Bushid et al., “Humans Can Discriminate More than 1 Trillion Olfactory Stimuli,” *Science* 343, no. 6177 (March 2014): 1370-1372.
- 8 Sophie Veitinger, “The Secret Power of Fragrance,” in *Belle Haleine: The Scent of Art: Interdisciplinary Symposium* (Basel: Museum Tinguely, 2016), 30.
- 9 David Howes, “Nose-wise,” 67.
- 10 Joanna Skrajny, “The Buzz about Native Bees.”
- 11 “Statistical Overview of the Canadian Honey and Bee Industry, 2019,” Government of Canada, last modified July 16, 2020, <https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/canadas-agriculture-sectors/horticulture/horticulture-sector-reports/statistical-overview-canadian-honey-and-bee-industry-2019>. Government of Canada, 2019.
- 12 Sissel Tolaas, “Nose It,” in *Belle Haleine: The Scent of Art: Interdisciplinary Symposium* (Basel: Museum Tinguely, 2016), 138.
- 13 Sharla Riddle, “How Bees See and Why It Matters,” *Bee Culture*, May 20, 2016, <https://www.beeculture.com/bees-see-matters/>.
- 14 Josep Peñuelas and Michael Staudt, “BVOCs and global change,” *Trends Plant Science* 15, no. 3 (March 2010): 133-144.

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Alana Bartol

Alana Bartol comes from a long line of water witches. Her site-responsive works explore divination as a way of understanding across places, species, and bodies. Through collaborative and individual works, she creates relationships between the personal sphere and the landscape, particular to this time of ecological crisis. Bartol's work has been presented in exhibitions and festivals across Canada and worldwide. In 2019 and 2021, she was long listed for Canada's Sobey Art Award. Of Scottish, German, English, French, Irish, and Danish ancestry, Bartol is a white settler Canadian currently living as an uninvited guest in Mohkínstsis (Calgary, AB) in Treaty 7 Territory where she is a sessional instructor at Alberta University of the Arts.

Bryce Krynski

Born in Winnipeg MB, to parents of Mennonite and Polish descent, Bryce Krynski currently lives and works in Mohkínstsis (Calgary, AB) in Treaty 7 territory. At first studying to become a chef, then changing course to journalism, Bryce found his way to photography as medium of expression and spent 10 years making images for national magazines and news outlets. The experience of producing images for assignment work led him to focus on what was happening behind the story, specifically what was excluded from the frame. A love of discarded scenes and overlooked materials are interwoven with themes of humour and being able to laugh in the face of personal misfortune. Bryce's work makes use of photography, video, new/archival/found images, digital manipulation, historical food narratives, found objects, and a desire to see in new ways, with a goal of establishing new stories out of this process. Bryce's work has been published and shown internationally and is part of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and Bow Valley College collections.

WRITER'S BIOGRAPHY

Lindsey Sharman

Lindsey V. Sharman is Curator at the Art Gallery of Alberta. She has studied Art History and Curating in Canada, England, Switzerland and Austria, earning degrees from the University of Saskatchewan and the University of the Arts, Zurich. From 2012-2018 she was the first curator of the Founders' Gallery at the Military Museums in Calgary, an academic appointment through the University of Calgary.

List of works

all roses sleep (inviolat light), 2022. HD, ultraviolet video, 14:02 minutes. Courtesy of the Artists.

all roses sleep (inviolat light), 2022. Scratch & sniff card. Courtesy of the Artists.

The RBC New Works Gallery features new works by Alberta artists. Initiated in 1998 and named the RBC New Works Gallery in 2008, this gallery space continues the Art Gallery of Alberta's commitment to supporting Alberta artists.

Organized by the Art Gallery of Alberta.



Located in Edmonton Amiskwaciwâskahikan ᑭᓯᓐᑲᓐᑲᓐᑲᓐᑲᓐ. We respectfully acknowledge Treaty 6 Territory and Region 4 of the Métis Nation of Alberta, the traditional lands of First Nations and Métis peoples.

© Art Gallery of Alberta 2022
ISBN: 978-1-77179-040-6

Editor: Danielle Siemens
Design: Charles Cousins
Photography: Alana Bartol and Bryce Krynski
Essay: Lindsey Sharman
Printing: Burke Group
Printed in Canada

Presented with the support of the RBC Emerging Artists Project.



Foundation

The Art Gallery of Alberta is grateful for the generous support of our many public and private donors and sponsors, as well as the ongoing support of the City of Edmonton, the Edmonton Arts Council, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Canada Council for the Arts.

The artists would like to thank Alberta Foundation for the Arts and Alberta University of the Arts for support through the Faculty Professional Development Fund.



Edmonton



Cover Image: Alana Bartol and Bryce Krynski, *all roses sleep (inviolat light)*, 2022. Video still.
Courtesy of the Artists.



RBC
NEW
WORKS
GALLERY