



## ABOUT CARLA GANNIS

Carla Gannis is known for her pioneering work that fuses technology and traditional media, producing multilayered narratives that challenge societal norms and immerse viewers in visually engaging experiences. Gannis's art is characterized by a commitment to experimentation. Throughout her career, she has worked with an array of mediums and tools, including drawing, painting, video, extended reality, and machine learning models. Her multilayered narratives engage with the loci of identity within the context of hyperreal 21st century conditions.

Gannis holds an MFA in painting from Boston University and a BFA in painting from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Today she teaches "healing-edge" technology as an Industry Professor at NYU's Tandon School of Engineering in the Department of Technology, Culture, and Society. Her work has been exhibited in the Whitney Museum of American Art, Artport, New York, NY; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC; Moscow Museum of Applied Art, Russia; Modern and Contemporary Art Museum, Byblos, Lebanon; and many others across the globe.

## ABOUT C.A.R.L.A. G.A.N.

Short for Crossplatform Avatar for Recursive Life Action Generative Adversarial Network, C.A.R.L.A. G.A.N. is the virtual avatar and frequent collaborator of Carla Gannis. C.A.R.L.A. G.A.N. operates as a post-human representation of the solidfying continuum between humans and machines.

### RELATED EVENTS

All events during this exhibition will occur in person in the Halsey Institute galleries, subject to change. Events are free and open to the public, unless noted. Check [halsey.cofc.edu](http://halsey.cofc.edu) for up-to-date information.

#### OPENING RECEPTION

Friday, May 19, 6:30 - 8:00 PM  
Free for Halsey Institute Members, suggested \$5 donation otherwise

#### ARTIST TALK

Saturday, May 20, 2:00 PM

#### ANNEX DANCE COMPANY V3: A DANCE INSTALLATION

Thursday, June 1, 5:30 PM  
Friday, June 2, 11:30 AM  
Thursday, June 8, 6:30 PM

#### CURATOR COFFEE CLUB

Friday, June 2, 9:00 - 11:00 AM  
Open to Halsey Institute Members

#### HALSEY AFTER HOURS

Wednesday, June 21, 5:00 - 7:00 PM  
Free for Halsey Institute Members, suggested \$10 donation otherwise

#### SIT A SPELL: COFC'S COMPUTING IN THE ARTS PROGRAM

Thursday, June 29, 12:00 PM

#### FAMILY DAY!

Sunday, July 9, 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM  
Free for Halsey Institute Members, suggested \$5 donation otherwise

**THE HALSEY INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART**  
at the College of Charleston School of the Arts

#### LOCATION

The Marion and Wayland H. Cato Jr. Center for the Arts  
College of Charleston  
161 Calhoun Street, Charleston, SC 29401  
[halsey.cofc.edu](http://halsey.cofc.edu)

#### PARKING

Available in the St. Philip St. and George St. garages

#### GALLERY HOURS

During exhibitions  
Monday - Saturday, 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM  
Open until 7:00 PM on Thursdays  
FREE FOR ALL

#### CONTACT

(843) 953-4422 or [halsey@cofc.edu](mailto:halsey@cofc.edu)

#### IMAGE CREDITS:

**this side, left:** Carla Gannis, *Honeycomb Library*, 2023. Digital print on vinyl, 38x30"  
**reverse side, left:** Carla Gannis, *wwwunderkammer Lobby*, 2020-ongoing, social VR experience  
**reverse side, center:** Carla Gannis, *wwwunderkammer Main Cabinet, Cabinet of Endangered and Emerging Species* (detail), 2020-ongoing. Digital print on Xanita  
**reverse side, right:** Carla Gannis, *Cosmos*, 2023. Digital print on vinyl, 39 x 39"  
**cover:** Carla Gannis, *Video Game Cabinet Castle* (detail). 2023. Digital print on vinyl, 156 x 88"

All works © Carla Gannis

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# CARLA GANNIS / C.A.R.L.A. G.A.N.

## wwwunderkammer

May 19 - July 15, 2023





## Envisioning the Digital Realm

By Dr. Marian Mazzone

In what will be a new art viewing experience for many, Carla Gannis has crafted a mezzanine between the physical worlds of our walking bodies in the Halsey Institute galleries and the new realm being built in the digital universe beyond. Gannis's *wwwunderkammer* was first built in 2020 as a social VR (virtual reality) experience and has accomplished the feat of translating to the physical world in this exhibition. What began as a desktop computer or web experience has been brought to tangible life via vinyl installations, drawings, sculpture, video, and holograms. Through VR and AR (augmented reality), viewers will stand in the galleries but also project into digital space, and there find a congenial guide in Gannis's avatar C.A.R.L.A. G.A.N. (Crossplatform Avatar for Recursive Life Action Generative Adversarial Network). She will guide you into the *wwwunderkammer*, a hybrid place where seemingly flat images morph into 3D objects and forms, moving and turning in their display frames and cases with the aid of iPads. It may feel foreign, but take care to relax and have fun, explore and be open to the new, and wonder at the strange new art forms and creatures to encounter in this 21st century Wunderkammer.

The Wunderkammer is an old European trope, a cabinet stuffed full of glittering objects, fossils and shells, odd bits scrounged from around the globe. Those European cabinets tended to stay closed, though, and harbor only old and bizarre objects the owner could find no practical use for. Thus, they became separate, other objects that might function elsewhere, but here were left in useless isolation, only to intrigue by their strange appearance. Gannis is creating a very different kind of Wunderkammer. Hers is not a collection of disembodied, non-functional things squirreled

away as if frozen in amber. Gannis's *wwwunderkammer* is more like an emporium set up on the raw edge of a growing new digital realm. The *wwwunderkammer* invites us to witness as it rapidly generates its own sights and wonders, new life forms, and new territories to explore.

Gannis has corralled for us some of the latest specimens that she is working on bringing into being, species and denizens for this realm we sometimes call digital space, webspace, the computational realm. Think of it as the networked and interwoven spaces within and between our machines, the vast space that you cut through when you designate a path to a particular point via your web browser. It is an ever-growing realm, being generated by not one entity but between and among all while building and communicating through our machines. There's a lot of computational space out there; And sometimes it's helpful to have a guide. Gannis has long operated in this role, with a body of work concerned with wayfinding in this digital realm and introducing us to some of the new denizens, as well as those who have been historically marginalized.

The exhibition has pulled out into physical space some of the key places and components in Gannis's virtual *wwwunderkammer*: the Lobby, Video Game Cabinet Castle, performances by avatar Virtues and Vices, and a recreation of The Main Chamber. Think a bit like Las Vegas hotel glitz, with the charm of the new and exciting. Gannis and C.A.R.L.A. G.A.N. detail some of the objects that have been created for the new realm; objects that might remind us of things we've seen before but that are decidedly not just like things are back here in the "real world." When using the provided VR headset, cheekily perched atop a skull, we notice we



also have a different body on the other side, one that moves freely and floats quickly through space. We can see and encounter more when we take on our new digital skins.

Gannis is an artist working in new media, a broad term that is used to indicate an artist working with technology, specifically technology that is computer-based and focused on visual or verbal communication. She teaches in a program that trains other artists in their use of technology and expression. Gannis has a wicked sense of humor, and places herself front and center as the creator of this little pocket of the digital realm she has dubbed the *wwwunderkammer*, even asking the Virtues and Vices in the video installation to answer the question "Who is Carla Gannis?" Gannis provides us with a key clue in a reference to Margaret Cavendish's 17th century short work *The Blazing World*, one of the first examples of what would come to be known as science fiction. In that work, the characters slip into an alternative world somewhere up around the North Pole, where divisions between sky/ground, east/west, day/night become too thin to hold. This blazing world is like but decidedly not like our daily world; it's different and it demands our attention. In a similar vein, Carla Gannis invites us to see and experience a new world in the *wwwunderkammer* if only we have the courage to step right in.

Dr. Marian Mazzone is Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art in the Department of Art History at the College of Charleston.

