

The Creators Project

Miami Artist Offers a VR-Inspired Guided Pool Meditation

Monica Uszerowicz — Mar 25 2016



Courtesy the artist

For an act that weighs so heavily on just being mindful, meditation can feel surprisingly complicated: you have to be fully, unabashedly present in your body, whilst never thinking too much about it. In short, it's a lot of awareness, then lack thereof. For [Current](#), part of [O, Miami](#), the city's month-long poetry festival, artist/technomancer [Jillian Mayer](#) will facilitate a guided underwater meditation at The Standard Spa in Miami Beach, asking participants for simultaneous engagement and disembodiment: they'll don blacked-out goggles and a snorkel, and then, with the help of a noodle float, submerge themselves up to their ears in the hotel's pool—the poppy techno usually pumped from the underwater speakers replaced with an audio composition that's, in her own words, “abstracted from various poems that have influenced this piece.” Michael John Hancock of Miami mainstays [Awesome New Republic](#) will compose an accompanying original score.

While the experience requires total presence, participants won't have access to all five senses—and though it's collective, none of them will interact with each other. Mayer's work explores, in her own words, “how technology affects our identities, lives, and experiences.” Technology's impact on the body, too, is of interest to Mayer; she's currently working on *Slumpies*, a series of sculptures for slumping and staring at your phone—or, for what she describes as a “post-posture world that would rather be phone-gazing while in public.” With *Current*, she'll take her ideas a step further. The meditation, in both content and form, addresses concepts like online behavior—in which we are all

together, but singularly alone in front of our laptops—human attempts to control time, and post-humanity, when the body and mind will no longer need to connect. “I often think about the body and the head,” she says, “and if they really need each other anymore. With notions of the technical singularity being mentioned in everyday conversations, does it really matter if the body decays? Perhaps the idea of the figure floating without the traditional constraints of gravity interests me because I’m asking so little of the participants’ bodies, except to exist and keep the organs going.”

By negating the option of sight, Mayer places the focus squarely on the head. “By doing so, I believe that the brain will be able to receive the audio component with less things to render,” she explains. That 'current' is a homonym, meaning both a kind of movement (along bodies of water) and state of being (right now) makes sense—*Current* is a sort of sensory-deprivation tank, inspired by the merge of technology with physicality. Even the goggles themselves are based on virtual reality headsets. “So much of the promise that virtual reality says it’ll offer is full immersion, which is an idea of ‘being there,’” Mayer adds. Fast-forwarding to the singularity by way of blind underwater submersion, floating without the constraints of time, is as good a way to be there as any.



Nessie, courtesy the artist

Current will happen in collaboration with O, Miami at The Standard Spa, 40 Island Avenue, Miami Beach, Florida, on April 6. Subsequent meditations will take place as per sign-up. More information is available [here](#).