

ROCK BOTTOM

ABE SUGARMAN

Part of arebyte 2022/23 programme [Sci-Fi](#)

Opening Event : Thu 16 March 2023 6:30-9pm

Exhibition runs until 15 April 2023

arebyte Gallery London



Abe Sugarman, still from *Rock Bottom* game, 2023. Commissioned by arebyte.

arebyte's new exhibition [Rock Bottom](#), by Abe Sugarman, transforms the gallery into an immersive game experience where the physical and the virtual collide. Set deep inside a cryptic ocean trench, a bottomless abyss that no light can penetrate, visitors embark on a choose-your-own-adventure journey composed of games, video works and sculpture.

The show represents the culmination of arebyte's annual *hotel generation* programme, which is designed to mentor the next generation of UK digital artists during the critical early stages of their careers and whose 2022 edition was awarded to Abe Sugarman.

The exhibition explores concepts of queer and jellyfish temporalities, where restarting and rejuvenation become the metaphorical pointers to introduce the narrative of survival.

The installation expands the gameplay into the physical space through life-size characters and theatrical props, encouraging players to become entangled in game worlds both virtual and physical. The gallery is divided into zones dedicated to different areas of investigation within the exhibition: Northern values and patriotism, the transitory Jellyfish life cycle, and reconciliation of the dual fear and temptation of the unknown.

The exhibition explores how ecological disasters can form new bodily relationships with futures and survival. Familiar and otherworldly locations, from the depths of the River Calder Valley to the Jellyfish Fields, reflect a time of instability, with unfolding crises of the environment, gender stereotyping and the silencing of cast-aside voices. Encouraging us to understand worlds we don't yet know, *Rock Bottom* verges into science fiction in its imagining of major environmental change and exploration of the meaning of time at the bottom of the ocean.

Our protagonist's descent into the darkest ocean trench reveals the inherent struggle towards escape when we truly hit rock bottom. When we interact with the characters that we find there, they reveal death drive behaviours and sentiments through strange conversations, actions, and emotes. It becomes apparent that within the struggle and darkness of localised and planetary pain, light and optimism will emerge through the rethinking and recontextualising of spacetime.

The judging panel for the 2022 edition of *hotel generation* consisted of artist Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, Head of Digital Arts Computing BSc at Goldsmiths Rachel Falconer, cultural producer Yinka Danmole and curator of Digital at the V&A Melanie Lenz. This exhibition concludes arebyte's 2022/23 programme [Sci-Fi](#) which looks at fictioning and alternative futures through a series of exhibitions, live performances, online experiences and educational activities.

Rock Bottom is accompanied by a booklet featuring texts by arebyte's curator Rebecca Edwards, academic Jack Halberstam and artist Abe Sugarman.

A programme of talks, online gameplay events and workshops accompanying the exhibition can be viewed [here](#).

Notes to Editors

arebyte press contact:

For further information, images and interview requests please contact Giulia Ponzano at giulia.ponzano@arebyte.com

arebyte Gallery
Java House,
7 Botanic Square
London City Island
E14 0LG

Nearest tube: Canning Town (Jubilee / DLR) | Gallery open Tues - Sat 1-6pm

Instagram [@arebyte](#) | Twitter [@arebyte](#) | Facebook [/arebyte.Gallery](#)

arebyte leads a pioneering digital art programme at the intersection of new technologies and contemporary culture. From net art's inception in the 90s to more recent innovations in computer technology from VR to AI, the programme invites multiple voices to create multimedia installations at **arebyte Gallery** (London) and online experiences for **arebyte on Screen**.

Alongside the art programme, **arebyte Skills** shares knowledge on creative media technologies with audiences of all ages, through workshops, artist development programmes, university residencies and panel discussions on digital art practices.

arebyte also supports a vibrant community of artists, designers and creative technologists through **arebyte Studios**, an initiative that provides affordable workspaces to 150 creative professionals across London.

hotel generation mentors the next generation of UK digital artists during the critical early stages of establishing a career in the arts. Working closely with arebyte's team, four shortlisted digital artists from regional UK cities are provided with professional guidance, studio visits and general mentoring in producing a proposal for a body of work based on arebyte's 2022 theme Sci-Fi. At the end of the four months development programme, one of the four proposals is selected by the judging panel to be fully developed into a solo exhibition at arebyte Gallery.

Artist Biography

[Abe Sugarman](#) is a multimedia artist based in West Yorkshire, who operates as an agent within a game. Abe uses their political proposal 'Jellyfish temporality': as a non-linear model of queer time and survival against geological stratification. Abe combines the circular and entwined web of bodies and systems that exist in the bio-membrane, where a diagrammatic tissue of lies and life cycles emerges through reverberation, compulsion, and restarting. In this newly formed 'Anthrobussy', the rehearsal assembles. Abe enjoys SpongeBob SquarePants, cuttlefish, and Gordon Riggs Garden Centre.

Abe graduated from the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford. Previous solo and group exhibitions include: Unit 1 Gallery Workshop, London; Ruskin Project Space, Oxford; Five Folds, London.