

## **Nina E. SCHÖNEFELD**

(born 1972 in Berlin, Germany. Lives and works in Berlin and Ibiza, Spain.)



### ***P. A. R. A. D. I. S. E.* (2023/25), HD video, 27:23, colour, sound**

The video *P. A. R. A. D. I. S. E.* deals with the difference between the experience of virtual reality in artificial space and the experience of physically tangible reality in nature. Even though real reality may often seem surreal, and virtual reality is becoming more and more realistic, there is still a difference between them: the question of truth. The film's premise is also its final line: "We don't need Virtual Reality, we need Virtual Unreality". The fictional story of Schönefeld's video revolves around *P. A. R. A. D. I. S. E.*, a new Virtual Reality program designed to make its users experience ultimate feelings. In it, people test their limits, blurring the lines between the virtual and the real; while the video contrasts artificially created high-tech shots with documentary-like shots of nature. As in all of Schönefeld's videos, *P. A. R. A. D. I. S. E.* is set in a fictional future that seems close enough to become our imminent reality. Will this virtual world of digitized experience become the landscape of our future?

The word ‘paradise’, evolving through Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and Latin traditions to represent everything from Edenic innocence to celestial afterlives, remains in all these languages rooted in the ancient Persian *pairidaeza*, meaning “walled garden”. Paradise is a tamed landscape—designed, enclosed, and idealized—a space where nature is shaped by human vision and desire. By this definition, the infinite universes of Virtual Reality could all be called paradise. Yet in Schönefeld’s film, her title is a paradox, as the virtual worlds she unfolds are deadly. Unlike the safely enclosed pleasure gardens of its namesake, Schönefeld’s *P. A. R. A. D. I. S. E.* crosses the threshold between the virtual and the real. *Schönefeld’s futuristic scenarios, set close enough ahead to be just within our reach*, are prophetic in the sense that they provide a glimpse of a future that is all too possible; a digital world in which past, present, and future converge on a virtual plane of inner landscapes that are experienced much more sharply than the real.

**TRILOGY OF TOMORROW (*D A R K W A T E R S* // *S N O W F O X* // *L.E.O.P.A.R.T.*):**

***D A R K W A T E R S* (2018)**, HD video, 15:55, b/w & colour, sound

***S N O W F O X* (2018)**, HD video, 10:03, b/w & colour, sound

***L.E.O.P.A.R.T.* (2019)**, HD video, 17:13, b/w & colour, sound

In this haunting trilogy of speculative video narratives, Schönefeld excavates futuristic landscapes that are, in fact, echoes of our present ecological and political crises—turning cautionary prophecies into embodied cinematic warning signs. Schönefeld’s films unfold in futures close enough to feel imminent—visions that are not fantastical, but unsettlingly plausible. Her video series, *TRILOGY OF TOMORROW (D A R K W A T E R S // S N O W F O X // L.E.O.P.A.R.T.)*, created between 2018 and 2019, was set in the imagined tomorrows of 2023, 2029, and 2032. Now, one of those projected futures has already become our past—transforming what was once fiction into a lived reality. In its convergence of past prediction and future condition, Schönefeld’s work echoes the premise of *Landscapes of Futures Past*: it is a meditation on the ways that imagined futures, and experienced pasts, inevitably loop back to define our present landscapes—political, environmental, and psychological.

*D A R K W A T E R S* (2018) unfolds in 2029, in oceans rendered into death zones by plastic pollution. Following the exploits of Silver Ocean, its protagonist, the work becomes a visceral investigation into hidden environmental collapse: a poetic reckoning with seas that once promised life but now are deadly.

*S N O W F O X* (2018) projects us into 2023, a world manipulated by corporate “weather engineers” whose tampering sows neural disease. Snow Fox, its titular heroine, joins a resistance group of women struggling to reclaim Earth’s vanishing landscapes and seeks sanctuary in the last vestiges of wild nature—a terrain made political and personal by their struggle for survival.

*L.E.O.P.A.R.T.* (2019) leaps forward to 2032, where mutated crops and a monolithic seed corporation have monopolized life itself. In an insurgent narrative of human agency against engineered ecological futures, L.E.O. establishes a self-sufficient camp where she leads a revolt of survivors who have refused genetic entrapment.

Like a time machine, this trilogy collapses future dystopias and present realities into one liminal space. Schönefeld's cinematic landscapes — polluted seas, weather-scarred wastelands, genetically controlled fields — simultaneously act as prophecy and memory to evoke what future generations may well look back upon as our unheeded environmental reckoning. Visually rich and emotionally resonant, these video works compel viewers to confront the consequences of our collective inaction. Each layer of the trilogy lives in the shadow of warnings once dismissed, reminding us that for today's landscapes to avoid becoming tomorrow's nightmares, our choices must build upon firm knowledge of the past in order to transform the future.

## **ARTIST BIO**

[www.ninaeschoenefeld.com](http://www.ninaeschoenefeld.com)

Nina E. Schönefeld is a Berlin-based interdisciplinary artist of German/Polish descent, and PhD scholar in art theory, whose practice spans video, installation, sculpture, light, electronics, and AI-driven media. With influences ranging from the early-20th-century avant-garde to urgent contemporary crises, her cinematic works confront the seductive aesthetics of consumer culture with a sharp political edge. Rather than offering escapism, Schönefeld's immersive narratives expose the cracks in the glossy surface of capitalist modernity. Her work grapples with the most pressing dilemmas of a hyper-mediated, hyper-consumerist West—where environmental collapse, authoritarianism, and algorithmic control are too often obscured by distraction and spectacle. Central to her practice are stories of abrupt societal rupture: digital surveillance, nuclear threat, ecological devastation, and the fragile illusions of freedom under neoliberal systems. Her protagonists—frequently women—navigate dystopian near-futures where rebellion becomes survival, and where the cost of complacency is laid bare.

A selection of Schönefeld's recent major museum and institutional exhibitions includes: 2024 - *RIDE OR DIE* (solo), KINDL Center for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany; *NO FUTURE* (solo), Lothringer 13 & Münchner Kammerspiele & Habibi Kiosk, Munich, Germany; MSU Museum (CoLab Studio, Michigan State University), Michigan, USA; GDM Contemporary Gallery, Ostrava, Czech Republic. 2023 - *FUCK THE SYSTEM* (solo), Diskurs Berlin, Germany; Kunsthalle Osnabrück, Germany; Ikono TV, COP28, Dubai; Gong Gallery, with Goethe-Institutes Prague & Bratislava, Ostrava, Czech Republic; Aleš South Bohemian Art Museum, Czech Republic; GDM Contemporary Gallery, Ostrava, Czech Republic; Kultursymposion Weimar, Goethe-Institute & Galerie Eigenheim, Weimar, Germany; LAGOS Gallery, Mexico City, Mexico. 2022 - *Enemy Within* (solo), Berlin Weekly Gallery; Haus am Lützowplatz, Berlin, Germany; Ikono TV,

COP27, Egypt; Diskurs Gallery Berlin, Germany; Artspring-Festival, Berlin, Germany. 2021 - Heidelberger Kunstverein, Heidelberg, Germany; MOMENTUM, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany; Alte Münze, Berlin, Germany; CICA Museum, Gyeonggi-Do, Korea; Kunstverein Familie Montez, Frankfurt, Germany; Seoul International ALT Cinema & Media Arts Festival (NeMaf), Seoul, Korea; Art Life Foundation, Hong Kong, China; ARTSPRING-Festival, Berlin, Germany; Roppongi Art Festival, Tokyo, Japan. 2020 - Heidelberger Kunstverein, Heidelberg, Germany; Weltkunstzimmer, Düsseldorf, Germany; Kunsthalle Bratislava Museum, Slovakia; Galerie la Pierre Large, Strasbourg, France; MOMENTUM, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany; Contemplatio Art, Germany. 2019 - Aram Art Museum, Seoul, South Korea; Alternative Culture Making Art Space, Shenzhen, China; Federation Square, Melbourne, Australia; MOMENTUM, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany; Anima Mundi Festival 2019, Palazzo Ca' Zanardi, Venice, Italy; Bamhaus Luxembourg, Luxembourg; Mitte Media Festival 2019, Berlin, Germany; Made In NY Media Center by IFP, New York City, USA; Villa Heike, Berlin, Germany. 2018 - Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, Germany; Goethe Institut, Beijing, China; Kühlhaus, Berlin, Germany; BBA Artist Prize 2018 Berlin, Germany; Ex Pescheria Centrale, Trieste, Italy; Mitte Media Festival, Berlin; Palazzo Ca' Zanardi, Venice, Italy; THE ROOM Contemporary Art Space, Venice, Italy. And many others.