

Rebecca Brewer and Veit Laurent Kurz

Locus Amoenus: *Extinct Flame*

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Rebecca Brewer and Veit Laurent Kurz's Locus Amoenus: *Extinct Flame* is a site-specific, cultivated pond delineated by an impassive phosphorescent cube. The vignette emphasizes a modest grotto which rises above the self-oxygenating pool, where a small flame continually burns. Accompanying this courtyard installation are two projected films: Veit Laurent Kurz's *Rise and Fall of Hummerkreis* (2024) and Benjamin Saurer's *Candle to Candle* (2025) performance for organ.

This gesture of an everlasting flame emerges from the barren courtyard—itsself located amidst the neighbourhood's warehouse district where screeching trains and skeletal construction sites have scattered building debris—but is not intended to function as any kind of remediative project. Instead, the installation invites the viewer into a theatrical engagement with nature's quiet detail; a state of reflection which typically evokes the dimensions of the sacred now borders on camp.

Brewer and Kurz's installation draws from the *sottobosco* painting tradition, which typically depicts floral undergrowth and "lower orders" of creatures and insects who occupy the liminal and brackish spaces of a given environment. Further, the phrase *locus amoenus* refers to the ideological segregation of a cultivated garden space from urban conditions, creating a state of exception within the narrow confines of a domestic garden. Physically demarcated by assertive, minimalist geometry, the space now hovers between the real and the virtual—a boundary that diminishes as one attends to the quiet life of the plants and pollinators within. It remains uncertain whether the boundary attempts to cage or to emphasize the biome within.

Throughout its development as an aesthetic, virtuality has summoned visions of the past: romanticized landscapes, medieval ruins, pagan rituals, and mythic symbolism. Not exclusively codified as futuristic, the virtual space also functions as a profound echo chamber of collective memory, fantasy, and longing. It parallels the 19th century romantic landscape painting, functioning as a symbol of the sublime and the unknowable. The alcohol-burning flame symbolizes a different order of time, furtive and flickering, threatening to consume what the pond provides. Within the painterly *mise-en-scène*, however, the flame appears as an impossibly fugitive source of life drawing, warding off stasis from this still life.

The delineated space of the pond offers a mediated enchantment—one whose artistic augmentations, glowing contours, and iridescent minerals cannot overwhelm the quiet magic of the life-giving undergrowth.