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Exhibition

MARTIN ROTH

In May 2017 I cultivated a piece of land in Midtown Manhattan nurtured by tweets

MAY 4 – JUNE 21, 2017

Austrian Cultural Forum New York

11 East 52nd Street, New York

open daily, 10 AM – 6 PM

MAY 3: EXHIBITION OPENING

6:00 PM – 7:00 PM | ARTIST TALK & BOOK PRESENTATION

Martin Roth in conversation with **Kate Sutton** and **Daniel Bozhkov**

7:00 PM – 8:30 PM | OPENING RECEPTION

New York, April 2017 – The Austrian Cultural Forum New York (ACFNY) is pleased to present a new installation by Austrian-born, New York-based artist Martin Roth, titled ***In May 2017 I cultivated a piece of land in Midtown Manhattan nurtured by tweets.***

In his latest installation for the Austrian Cultural Forum New York, Martin Roth has created a retreat. Viewers, upon descending to the subterranean gallery, emerge into a simulated forest clearing. Trees, depicted on wallpaper, cover the walls. In the middle of the space, seven tons of soil and sand support over 200 lavender plants growing under fluorescent light. This uncanny sanctuary at the ACFNY in Midtown Manhattan is facilitated by the most unlikely of sources: tweets.

Roth has created a system by which the strength of the grow lights above the rows of lavender plants increases in direct relationship to the tweets of powerful public opinion shapers: as these statements are retweeted with greater frequency, the lights get stronger. Through this system, the lavender plants become a kind of a perverse index of the politico-cultural climate, metamorphosing these conditions by their thriving.

austrian cultural forum new york | 11 east 52nd street | new york | ny 10022 | phone=(212) 319 5300 | fax=(212) 644 8660 | desk@acfnyc.org | www.acfnyc.org

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The pace and tenor of the current political discourse, blasted out through social media 24/7 without respite, affects our psyche in a profound way. The lavender plant is known for its calming properties, and it is commonly used to treat sleep disorders and depression. The plant's restorative effect in Roth's installation at the ACFNY offers a reprieve against the heightened anxiety of our current moment. As controversy builds, the scent of lavender becomes stronger. What this amounts to is a kind of lush bunker; Roth's refuge at once affords the viewer escape from the world and reminds them of its instability.

By spatializing the data generated by the Twitter accounts, Roth's eerie simulation makes explicit the convergence of the psychical structures that undergird our politics and the felt life of the American every day. Today's media culture has surpassed the time of response; indeed, it has transcended even the time of *media*. We exist in one interminable present wherein the actions of a few agents have *immediate*, pervasive, and grave consequence. Like many of Roth's previous works, *In May 2017 I cultivated a piece of land in Midtown Manhattan nurtured by tweets* is a kind of processual refuge whereby the slow temporality of plant life allows for a site of contemplative calm. The viewer's sense of smell is the primary means of apprehending Roth's installation; the work *enters* the viewer, alerting the body politic to an insidious undercurrent of anxiety.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Martin Roth (b. 1977, Graz Austria) received an MFA from Hunter College, New York in 2011, and previous to that, studied at Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts and SOMA, Mexico City. Roth has exhibited internationally, including group exhibitions at The Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Künstlerhaus and mumok, Vienna, Austria; Dittrich & Schlechtriem, Berlin, Germany; The Artist's Institute and Kunstraum, New York, NY; and solo shows at Capital Gallery, San Francisco, CA; Biquini Wax, Mexico City, Mexico; and Louis B. James, New York, NY. Roth lives and works in New York.

ABOUT THE AUSTRIAN CULTURAL FORUM NEW YORK

With its architectural landmark building in Midtown Manhattan, the Austrian Cultural Forum New York is dedicated to innovative and cutting-edge programming, showcasing the best of Austrian contemporary art, music, literature, performance, and academic thought in New York and throughout the United States. In addition to presenting three group exhibitions per year in its multi-level gallery space and housing around 10,000 volumes of Austriaca in its state-of-the-art library, it hosts over 100 free events per year in its own auditorium and supports at least as many projects at partner institutions across the nation. Visit www.acfny.org for more information.

Austrian Cultural Forum New York
11 East 52nd St. (btw. Madison & 5th)
New York, NY 10022
(212) 319 5300
Open Daily 10 AM – 6 PM

Admission to exhibitions, concerts, and other events is free.

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MEDIA CONTACT

Judith Brand
judith.brand@bmeia.gv.at
+1 (212) 319 5300 ext.78