

Art Now LA, July 23, 2026

Refik Anadol: Machine Dreams
A Quasi-Educational Entertainment
Dataland
June 20, 2026 – January 31, 2027

by Jody Zellen



Dataland is a new immersive exhibition space located in downtown Los Angeles conceptualized by the Turkish American artist Refik Anadol and his wife Efsun Erkiliç. Anadol is touted as a data visualization visionary — a boy wonder of sorts — known for immersive installations and public art projects in which architectural exteriors appear to come alive with projection and sound. For example, in 2018 the LA Philharmonic invited Anadol to produce an expansive work for the facade of Walt Disney Concert Hall. He was also commissioned to create an ever-changing display of undulating imagery for the 2023 Grammy Awards. Anadol draws from a range of sources including his own biometrics, environmental and scientific data, as well as art history. He uses his sophisticated computational skills to engage with new technologies including AI to compile images, data streams and sounds that result in complex generative animations. While his works can be shown on small screens, when they are projected large or screened on high tech, LED displays they have the greatest impact. In many instances, Anadol has built immersive spaces where floor to ceiling displays surround the viewer. Anadol's list of projects and exhibitions is impressive for an artist still in his 40s. It is incredible that in less than twenty years, he has built a studio and accomplished so much.

Some highlights include *Unsupervised*, Anadol's exhibit at MoMA, where he used the collection as a point of departure, employing AI to “walk through its conception of MoMA's collections and reimagine the history of modern art and dream about what might have been and what might be to come.” According to Anadol, “the AI-based abstract images and shapes are the result of the machine's unsupervised learning of modern art and are dictated by the Museum's collection archive.” The captivating result was an ever-morphing display that filled a bright 24 x 24 foot digital screen in the museum's lobby.

In Los Angeles, his first solo gallery exhibition was in 2023 at Jeffrey Deitch Gallery. Here, viewers unfamiliar with Anadol's work were introduced to his process and visual language and could see first-hand how he integrates aesthetics and technology. Some of the pieces were purely visual — sensational flows of colorful undulating forms culled from real-world data, while others were purposely more didactic and explanatory, presenting viewers with source materials and snippets of the code used in the works to help understand how Anadol and his studio transform data. Three years later, Anadol just opened a permanent display, a quasi-museum called Dataland.

Dataland is billed as “the world's first museum of AI Arts and digital ecosystems.” It is a self-funded (ie. not a public or non-profit institution) space that functions as a private museum. A visit to Dataland is not quick, nor should it be. Tickets are expensive and entry is timed and limited to a fixed number of viewers per hour. Visitors put on booties over their shoes and wear devices around their necks that emit smells, and watches to record their personal data that is

then integrated anonymously into the machinations of the exhibition. Once the group is ready, they move through a darkened corridor and down an escalator into the “main chamber” of the installation.

The initial exhibition titled *Machine Dreams: Rainforest* occupies five “multi-sensory galleries,” each immersive in its own way. “Gallery A – The Data Pavilion Latent Forest” is a cavernous space in which ever-changing images, inspired by Anadol’s memories of his visits to the Amazon rainforest surround viewers. The display is powered by 84 high resolution projectors and numerous speakers. As viewers traverse the environment, the atmosphere — including projected flora and fauna — changes continuously.

“Gallery B – Latent Gallery” has three stations set up for viewer interaction. Here, one can select different “forms” and see how these various choices change through interactions on smaller screens. Human touch becomes a “data painting” and motion sensing technology tracks body movements turning them into fluid shapes, lines and patterns. Viewers can save their “creations” and scan QR codes to download them to their personal devices.

In “Gallery C – Infinity Room” and “Gallery D – The Sanctuary,” smaller groups of visitors are invited into dark spaces where they witness projected displays that last around eight minutes each. The infinity room is a staple in Anadol’s installations: it is filled with dream-like imagery that surrounds the viewer. This iteration titled *The Dream of Ruwe Pinu* was inspired by Anadol’s trip to the Amazon rainforest and is comprised of a beautifully animated hummingbird, butterflies and other creatures that flutter and flow as viewers watch this magical world unfold.

For Anadol, “The Sanctuary” was conceived as a more contemplative environment — a sanctuary — that offers protection and a place for restoration. A continuously evolving image spills out of a digital box like exploding waves. Modeled using AI and drawing from the visitors’ biometrics, the multi-sensory display bombards the viewer’s visual field.

Dataland is quasi-educational entertainment. While thought-provoking and visually engaging, a sense of art-world criticality is missing. It has more in common with “*Immersive Van Gogh*” than with a visit to traditional museum. It succeeds as a replica of life generated by numbers and sophisticated AI engines engineered to be a sensational immersive experience. To the layman however, it feels impossible to understand the technology and the fusing of datasets and imagery. The experience becomes one of image bombardment and sensory overload. The wow pervades, overwhelming the why and how. Any red flags about AI including energy resource allocation, or even Anadol’s concerns about climate change get lost in the sensationalism of the spectacle.

<https://artnowla.com/2026/07/23/refik-anadol-machine-dreams-rainforest/>