



Donald R. and Joan F. Beall
Center for Art + Technology
 University of California, Irvine

University of California, Irvine
 Claire Trevor School of the Arts

712 Arts Plaza, Irvine, CA 92697
 beallcenter.uci.edu
 (949) 824-6206

Hours: Monday – Saturday, 12-6 p.m.

PRESS PREVIEW KIT

DIFFERENCE MACHINES: TECHNOLOGY AND IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY ART

Organized by Buffalo AKG Art Museum

Curated by Tina Rivers Ryan and Paul Vanouse

Morehshin Allahyari
 Zach Blas
 Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley
 A.M. Darke
 Stephanie Dinkins
 Hasan Elahi
 Sean Fader
 Rian Ciela Hammond
 Rafael Lozano-Hemmer
 Joiri Minaya
 Mongrel
 Mendi + Keith Obadike
 Sondra Perry
 Keith Piper
 Skawennati
 Saya Woolfalk
 Lior Zalmanson



On View: January 28 – April 29, 2023

Opening Reception: January 28, 2023 2-5pm

Media previews available by appointment

IRVINE, Calif. (January 17, 2022) – The Beall Center for Art + Technology is pleased to announce *Difference Machines: Technology and Identity in Contemporary Art*, opening January 28 through April 29, 2023. This marks the second iteration and the first of three tour stops throughout the United States for the exhibition.

In response to ongoing conversations about systemic inequities, *Difference Machines: Technology and Identity in Contemporary Art* presents a diverse group of seventeen artists and collectives who creatively reimagine the digital tools that shape our lives. The exhibition includes projects that span the last three decades, ranging from software-based and internet art to animated videos, bioart experiments, digital games, and 3-D printed sculptures.

Press Contacts: David Familian, Beall Center Artistic Director: dfamilia@uci.edu
 Jaime DeJong, Director of Marketing and Communications: jdejong@uci.edu or (949) 824-2189



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Together, these works explore the aesthetic and social potential of emerging technologies. Some emphasize how digital tools can be repurposed to tell more inclusive stories or imagine new ways of being. Others show how becoming visible within digital systems can be a trap that leads to the technological exclusion, surveillance, and exploitation of marginalized communities. Dynamic and interactive, these projects transform the space in the gallery into a laboratory for reflecting on and experimenting with our increasingly powerful “difference machines” in the hopes of achieving a more equitable future.

The exhibition is co-curated by University at Buffalo Professor **Paul Vanouse** and Buffalo AKG Art Museum Curator **Tina Rivers Ryan**, who bring to the project over thirty years of experience working with media art, as well as their own personal experience of how technology can both help and harm marginalized communities.

“Since *Difference Machines* opened in Buffalo in the fall of 2021, the question of how technology shapes and reflects identity has become both more mainstream and more urgent,” explains Ryan. “We are grateful to our institutional partners for ensuring that more people will have the opportunity to experience these moving, thought-provoking artworks, and to imagine how we might work through the uses and abuses of technology towards a more equitable future.”

While recent exhibitions around the world have surveyed the impact of technology on the arts or examined what it means to be human in the digital age, *Difference Machines* is the first large-scale exhibition at a major museum to explore the connections between technology and systemic inequity, as manifested in problems like algorithmic bias and digital redlining.

“I’m interested in artists who recognize that technologies are social, active, and value-laden and not neutral tools, and who can leverage these qualities to take on larger questions and broader issues,” said Vanouse. “We especially wanted to emphasize that artists who work with technology can be critical of it—while simultaneously expanding our horizons of what technology, and art, can be.”

A public opening reception will take place on **Saturday, January 28, 2–5 p.m.** at the Beall Center for Art + Technology on the UCI Claire Trevor School of the Arts campus. Admission is free and open to the public. For inquiries or to schedule a guided tour, please contact Associate Director Fatima Manalili at fatima.m@uci.edu or (949) 824-6206.

For visitor protocols related to COVID-19 and up-to-date information, please visit the UCI Forward website at uci.edu/coronavirus.

Difference Machines: Technology and Identity in Contemporary Art is supported by The Beall Family Foundation.

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Image: Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF THOSE THAT ARE NOT*, 2020; Digital game displayed on projector; gaming chair; pink lights; and vinyl text. Courtesy of the artist.
Photo: Tina Rivers Ryan for Buffalo AKG Art Museum.

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Biographies: Curators

Dr. Tina Rivers Ryan has been a curator with the AKG since 2017. Before joining the AKG, she was a Curatorial Research Assistant in the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. She is a recognized expert in the field of media art, including video, digital, and internet art, and holds five degrees in art history, including a BA from Harvard and PhD from Columbia. Her exhibitions at the AKG include (with Paul Vanouse) 2021's *Difference Machines: Technology and Identity in Contemporary Art*, which received a 2022 Award for Excellence from the Association of Art Museum Curators, and 2022's *Peer to Peer*, which was named to Hyperallergic's list of the Top 50 Exhibitions of 2022. Her next major exhibition, *Electric Op*, will open at the AKG in the fall of 2024. Outside the museum, she regularly writes for *Artforum* and other magazines, as well as for exhibition catalogs from museums like Dia and the Walker Art Center. Her current research projects address the Web3 rhetoric of decentralization—for which she received the prestigious Arts Writers Grant from the Andy Warhol Foundation—and the relationship between technology and the body, informed by her experience of disability.

Paul Vanouse is a Professor of Art and Founding Director of the Coalesce Center for Biological Art at the University at Buffalo. A renowned media artist, his honors include a 2006 Creative Capital grant and the 2019 Golden Nica at PRIX Ars Electronica. Since the 1990s, his projects have foregrounded the social consequences of new technologies. His most recent works include genetic experiments that examine his own Jamaican-American parentage to undermine scientific constructions of race.

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Biographies: Artists

Morehshin Allahyari, Iranian-Kurdish, born 1985

Inspired by the creation of collective archives, Morehshin Allahyari (she/her/hers) makes 3-D printed sculptures, videos, and virtual reality experiences that challenge social and gender norms and explore cultural contradictions. She is the recipient of the United States Artist Fellowship (2021), and her work has been shown in venues such as the New Museum, New York, NY; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; and Centre Pompidou, Paris, France. Allahyari is currently a Visiting Guest Professor at Sarah Lawrence College. See more of Allahyari's work at her website: morehshin.com.

Zach Blas, American, born 1981

In a practice that spans moving images, computation, and performance, Zach Blas (he/him/his) draws out the philosophies and imaginaries lurking behind digital technologies such as artificial intelligence and biometric recognition. Most recently, his work has been featured in the touring exhibition *British Art Show 9* (2021–22) and the group show *Positions #6: Bodywork* at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands (2020–21). Blas is an Assistant Professor of Visual Studies at the University of Toronto. See more of Blas's work at his website: zachblas.info.

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, British, born 1995

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley (she/her/hers) works in animation, sound, performance, and video games. Her practice records the lives of Black Trans people, intertwining reality and fiction to create participatory work. In 2021 Brathwaite-Shirley was a resident artist at Wysing Arts Centre in South Cambridgeshire, UK. Her work has been shown at Science Gallery London, UK (2020); David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2020); and arebyte Gallery, London, UK (2021), among many others. An aspect of Brathwaite-Shirley's work is also available on her website: Daniellebrathwaiteshirley.com.

A.M. Darke, American, born 1986

A.M. Darke (he/him/his/she/her/hers) designs radical tools for social intervention. Her practice is polemical and interdisciplinary, integrating game design, performance, media art, and activism. Darke is Assistant Professor of Digital Arts and New Media, Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, and Art & Design: Games & Playable Media at UC Santa Cruz, where he also directs [The Other Lab](http://TheOtherLab), an intersectional feminist research space. See more of Darke's work at her website: prettydarke.cool.

Stephanie Dinkins, American, born 1964

Stephanie Dinkins's (she/her/hers) art practice employs emerging technologies, documentary practices, and social collaboration to build equity and community sovereignty. She is particularly driven to work with communities of color to co-create more equitable social and technological ecosystems. Dinkins is a Kusama Professor of Art at Stony Brook University, where she founded the Future Histories Studio. See more of Dinkins's work at her website: stephaniedinkins.com.

Hasan Elahi, American, born Bangladesh, 1972

After the attacks of 9/11, an erroneous tip led to an intensive FBI investigation of Hasan Elahi (he/him/his). It prompted the artist to create *Tracking Transience* (2003), which explores what it means to live in a state of constant surveillance. Elahi's projects dealing with surveillance, privacy, migration, citizenship, and the challenges of borders have been presented at SITE Santa Fe, NM; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; and the Sundance Film Festival, among other venues. He is Professor and Director of the School of Art at George Mason University. See more of Elahi's work at his website: elahi.gmu.edu.



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Sean Fader, American, born 1979

Sean Fader (he/him/his) is interested in how photographs circulate in digital systems, including on social media. His works and performances explore how digital technologies are transforming our concepts of sharing and collective authorship. His recent work was featured in the solo show *Thirst/Trap* at Denny Dimin Gallery, New York, NY (2020). Fader is a Professor of Photography at Tulane University. See more of Fader's work at his website: seanfader.com.

Rian Ciela Hammond, American, born 1988

The artist and biologist Rian Ciela Hammond (they/them/theirs) creates media-expansive artworks that invite people to examine the interactions between technology, power, and ways of knowing and being a body. Hammond's work can be found in the online publication [PUSH/PULL: Trans Family Archive](#) (2020) and has been exhibited at El Museo, Buffalo, NY (2020) and Gas, a mobile gallery in Los Angeles, CA (2019). Hammond is based in Lenapehoking (Jersey City, NJ). See more of Hammond's work at their website: rianhammond.com/

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Mexican-Canadian, born 1967

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer (he/him/his) is a media artist who develops platforms for public participation in urban, digital, and performative spaces. He has had major solo exhibitions at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey, Mexico (2020); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC (2019); and the Musée National des Beaux-Arts du Québec, Canada (2019). See more of Lozano-Hemmer's work at his website: lozano-hemmer.com.

Joiri Minaya, Dominican-United Statesian, born 1990

Joiri Minaya (she/her/hers) is a New York-based multi-disciplinary artist whose work investigates how the female body relates to the construction of identity, multicultural social spaces, and hierarchies. She is a 2021–22 Jerome Hill Artist Fellow; a 2020 recipient of the New York Artadia Award; and has participated in residencies at the International Studio & Curatorial Program, Brooklyn, NY (2021); Art Omi, Ghent, NY (2019); and the Lower East Side Printshop, New York, NY (2018–19). Minaya's work has been exhibited across the US, the Dominican Republic, and the Caribbean. See more of Minaya's work at her website: joiriminaya.com.

Mongrel, British, active 1995-2008

Mongrel was a shifting collective of multicultural artists who worked in different combinations around the world. Founded in London, they would go on to make work with townships in South Africa, rural communities in Jamaica, and the Surinam community in Amsterdam. The group emerged as a response to the racial exclusivity of the technology industry and as a way to explore the application of digital tools to artistic production. Members included Richard Pierre-Davis, mervin Jarman, Graham Harwood and Matsuko Yokokoji, and expanded to encompass Richard Wright, Matthew Fuller, and Lisa Haskell, among others. You can see more of Mongrel's work here: monoskop.org/Mongrel.

Mendi + Keith Obadike, American, each born 1973

Mendi + Keith Obadike make music, art, and literature that both use and critique digital tools. They have exhibited and performed at the New Museum, The Studio Museum in Harlem, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The Museum of Modern Art, all in New York, NY. Their honors include a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship in New Media Art; a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship in Fiction; and the Louis Comfort Tiffany Biennial Competition Award. See more of Mendi + Keith Obadike's work at their website: blacksoundart.com.

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Sondra Perry, American, born 1986

Sondra Perry (she/her/hers) makes videos and performances that foreground digital tools as a way to critically reflect on new technologies of representation to remobilize their potential. Perry has had solo exhibitions at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, Ohio (2019); Serpentine Gallery, London, UK (2018); and Squeaky Wheel Film & Media Art Center in Buffalo, NY (2018). See more of Perry's work at her website: sondraperry.com.

Keith Piper, British, born 1960

Keith Piper's (he/him/his) creative practice responds to specific social and political issues, historical relationships, and geographical sites. His work has been shown recently at Wolverhampton Art Gallery, UK (2019); Beaconsfield Gallery Vauxhall, London, UK (2017); and New Art Exchange, Nottingham, UK (2017). He teaches Fine Art at Middlesex University, London. See more of Piper's work at his website: keithpiper.info.

Skawennati, Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), born Canada, date unknown

In work that has been presented internationally, Skawennati (she/her/hers) addresses history, the future, and change from her perspective as an urban Kanien'kehá:ka woman and as a cyberpunk avatar. She also co-directs Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace, a research-creation network founded in 2005 and based at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. More of Skawennati's work can be found at her website: skawennati.com.

Saya Woolfalk, American, born Japan, 1979

The New York-based artist Saya Woolfalk (she/her/hers) uses science fiction and fantasy to re-imagine the world in multiple dimensions. Her videos, sculptures, and immersive environments have given life to the world of the Empathics, a fictional race of women who are able to alter their genetic make-up and fuse with plants. Recently, Woolfalk's work has been in the group exhibition *Born in Flames: Feminist Futures* at the The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, NY (2021) and in the solo show *Expedition to the ChimaCloud* at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO (2019). See more of Woolfalk's work at her website: sayawoolfalk.com.

Lior Zalmanson, Israeli, born 1983

Lior Zalmanson (he/him/his) is a writer, artist, and curator who uses film, theater, and digital technologies to explore digital culture, online behavior, and the information society. His works often involve hacking or reverse-engineering technologies that supposedly make the web more accessible and personalized. In 2011, he founded Print Screen Festival, Israel's digital arts festival. His projects have been showcased at venues including the Tribeca Film Festival and The Jewish Museum in New York, NY. He is currently an Assistant Professor at Tel Aviv University, Israel. See more of Zalmanson's work at his website: liorzalmanson.art.

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Fact Sheet

Difference Machines: Technology and Identity in Contemporary Art

Exhibition Iteration Dates:

January 28 - April 29, 2023

Beall Center for Art + Technology

<https://beallcenter.uci.edu/exhibitions/difference-machines>

Events:

Media Previews: By appointment

Open to all media affiliates, RSVP and appointment requests to jdejong@uci.edu

Launch Reception: Saturday, January 28, 2023, 2-5 p.m.

Free admission

Additional events to be announced online. To receive project-specific updates and invitations, join the project list at <http://beallcenter.uci.edu/exhibitions>

Description:

Difference Machines: Technology and Identity in Contemporary Art addresses the complex relationship between the technologies we use and the identities we inhabit. The exhibition presents the work of seventeen contemporary artists who ask some of the most urgent questions we face today: How is technology changing the way we see ourselves, and each other? In what ways does it contribute to—or allow us to resist—prejudice and systemic forms of oppression? What role should it have in our lives and in our communities?

Gallery Hours:

Monday - Saturday: 12 p.m. – 6 p.m.; Closed: Sundays

Free admission and docent tours

Holiday Closures: Jan. 16, Feb. 20

Location:

712 Arts Plaza, Claire Trevor School of the Arts, UC Irvine, Irvine, CA 92697

Parking:

Student Center Parking Structure: 311 W. Peltason Drive, Irvine, CA 92697

Mesa Parking Structure: 4000 Mesa Road, Irvine, CA 92697

**all campus parking requires payment; \$2 per hour, \$13 full day, \$18 reserved, credit and debit cards accepted*

For maps, driving directions and parking information go to: <http://www.parking.uci.edu/maps/imap.cfm>

Note to editors:

Selected high-resolution images for publicity only may be downloaded from

[PRESS IMAGES](#)

(*Google drive link. If you have any issues with access, please contact Jaime DeJong at jdejong@uci.edu*)

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About the Beall Center for Art + Technology

The Beall Center is an exhibition and research center located on the campus of the University of California, Irvine. Since its opening in 2000, the Beall Center's exhibitions, research, and public programs have promoted new forms of creation and expression. For artists, the Beall Center serves as a proving ground — a place between the artist's studio and the art museum — and allows them to work with new technologies in their early stages of development. For visitors, the Beall Center serves as a window to the most imaginative and creative innovations in the visual arts occurring anywhere. The Beall Center promotes new forms of creative expression by: exhibiting art that uses different forms of science and technology to engage the senses; building innovative scholarly relationships and community collaborations between artists, scientists and technologists; encouraging research and development of art forms that can affect the future; and reintroducing artistic and creative thinking into STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) integrated learning in K-12 to Higher Education. The Beall Center's curatorial focus presents a diverse range of innovative, world-renowned artists, both national and international, who work with experimental and interactive media. Many of these artists have shown their works primarily within group exhibitions or have a limited number of solo exhibitions in the US. The Beall Center is committed to exhibiting these artists in a way that more fully expresses their individual body of work. We strive to present a direct connection between our programs and the larger trajectory of the history of video, installation art, kinetic and cybernetic sculpture. Our approach is not to exclusively emphasize the technological aspects of works, but to present experimental media projects that are equally strong aesthetically, conceptually and technically.

The Beall Center received its initial support from the Rockwell Corporation in honor of retired chairman Don Beall and his wife, Joan; the core idea being to merge their lifelong passions - business, engineering and the arts - in one place. Today, major support is generously provided by the Beall Family Foundation. For more information, please visit beallcenter.uci.edu.

About UCI Claire Trevor School of the Arts

The Claire Trevor School of the Arts is UCI's creative laboratory, exploring and presenting the arts as the essence of human experience and expression through art forms ranging from the most traditional to the radically new. CTSA has proven itself to be a national leader in training emerging artists and performers since its establishment in 1965. In 2000, the school was named in honor of Academy Award-winning actress Claire Trevor and her involvement with the school and its students.

CTSA is home to the departments of art, dance, drama and music. Undergraduate and graduate degree courses include extensive studio, workshop and performance experiences; theoretical and historical studies; and arts and technology practices.

Boasting an acclaimed, international faculty who work across a wide variety of disciplines and partner with others across campus, CTSA also provides excellent facilities to support artistic development and research. These include four theaters; a concert hall; three art galleries; the Beall Center for Art + Technology; electronic music studios; cutting-edge costume, lighting and scenic design studios; a stage production shop; digital arts labs; and a video production studio. For more information, visit www.arts.uci.edu.

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About Buffalo AKG Art Museum

Founded in 1862, the Buffalo AKG Art Museum (formerly the Albright-Knox Art Gallery) is the sixth oldest public art institution in the United States. For 160 years, the Buffalo AKG has collected, conserved, and exhibited the art of its time, often working directly with living artists. This tradition has given rise to one of the world's most extraordinary collections of modern and contemporary art. The museum's collection spans some of the greatest moments in art through the centuries, beginning with *Marina Piccola, Capri*, 1859, by Albert Bierstadt—both the first painting and the first work gifted by an artist to enter the museum's collection—and is especially rich in postwar American and European art. On May 25, 2023, the Buffalo AKG will open a renewed and vastly expanded campus designed by OMA/Shohei Shigematsu. For more information, please visit <https://buffaloakg.org/>

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