

Mana Contemporary

Only Human

Presented by NEW INC and Nokia Bell Labs



Sougwen Chung, still from *Omnia*. Courtesy the artist and Cutter Hodierno.

NEW YORK, NY, April 6, 2018—NEW INC, the New Museum's cultural incubator, announces *Only Human*, an exhibition opening April 29, 2018, at Mana Contemporary in Jersey City, which showcases the work of the first cohort of NEW INC artists participating in the artist-in-residency program at Nokia Bell Labs. Three former NEW INC members—Sougwen Chung, Lisa Park, and Hammerstep (Jason Oremus and Garrett Coleman)—collaborated with Nokia Bell Labs researchers to produce new artistic projects inspired or enabled by Bell Labs technologies. As the culmination of this residency program, the exhibition brings together three projects that the artists created over the past year.

Similarly, NEW INC has furthered the New Museum's commitment to new art and new ideas as an incubator for creative entrepreneurs working at the intersection of art, design, and technology. The partnership between NEW INC and Nokia Bell Labs represents a leading collaboration fusing art and technology to change humanity. Mana Contemporary has established itself around forward-thinking partnerships that explore unconventional dynamics in the arts. *Only Human* represents an ideal collaboration within Mana's New Media Program.

The three projects in *Only Human* are focused on themes of human-computer collaboration and intersubjectivity, the nature of interpersonal relationships in a digitally mediated world, surveillance and power dynamics in a technocratic society, and the inevitable compromises that define our symbiotic relationship with technology. Each work strives to experiment with new artistic forms while also offering a speculative take on existing social structures and the potential implications of emerging technology.

Despite their strong focus on recent and future technologies, each of the three projects, at its core, ultimately

strives to emphasize qualities that seem innately human: empathy, intuition, and unspoken forms of communication such as gesture, touch, rhythm, and motion. The works consider what distinguishes human nature from the tools that we create; they underscore that while these tools are inherently part of us, they are also a product of our own imaginations.

OMNIA PER OMNIA BY SOUGWEN CHUNG

Sougwen Chung's *Omnia per Omnia* reimagines the tradition of landscape painting as a collaboration—between an artist, a robotic swarm, and the dynamic flow of a city. The work explores the poetics of human and machine, organic and synthetic, improvisational and computational modes of sensing.

Omnia per Omnia is presented as a live performance, alongside an exhibition of paintings and a short film. The work proposes the composite agency of an artist and a robotic swarm as speculation on new pluralities, and the beginnings of an art practice inspired by the Anthropocene. The work questions: *Are we at the onset of a new, collaborative imagination of radical new intersubjectivities? What does it mean to collaborate with the spaces we inhabit, the tools we build? Where does "I" end and "we" begin?* The work by Chung is made possible by the Nokia Bell Labs Motion Engine, which represents a new way to visually analyze complex natural and manmade systems. The Motion Engine acts as a visual mediator between Chung and the robotic swarm by breaking down the complexity of the city.

BLOOMING BY LISA PARK

In an increasingly digital, globalized world, how do we maintain, prioritize, and reinforce the preciousness of physical contact and in-person interactions? Lisa Park's *Blooming* is a metaphor for the importance of meaningful relationships in our lives, and specifically the importance of touch to create a deep sense of connection and overall sense of well-being. Touch is one of the first senses we develop as an infant; we begin receiving tactile signals from the vibrations of our mother's heartbeat and it remains as the most prominent form of communication throughout our lives. Research shows that touch is fundamental for communication, emotional and physical health, bonding, and overall well-being.

The installation, which takes the form of a life-size cherry blossom tree, responds to physical contact between two to four participants. When participants stand before the tree and hold hands or embrace, the tree will flourish in peak bloom; when they release, it will collapse into its pre-bloomed state. Cherry blossom viewing is a common tradition in East Asian cultures, with the lavish, short-lived blossoms serving as a reminder of life's transience and preciousness.

The tree also symbolizes social ties, continuance, and spiritual beauty.

Park's work is augmented by advanced research at Nokia Bell Labs into sensor technology that enables the detection and determination of intimate contact between people.

INDIGO GREY: THE MICAH GREY EXPERIMENT BY HAMMERSTEP

In the near future, society on the Eastern seaboard has fallen apart. New York City's utopian Sixth Borough and its cutting-edge research facility, Borough Labs, are searching for solutions to the worldwide energy and humanitarian crises. Chief Engineer Micah Grey has discovered the presence of a Indigo energy life force, demonstrated through the physical and extrasensory abilities of society's most creative and innovative individuals. Heightened movement initiative is a core indicator of "Indigo abilities"—imperative for the development of the Sixth Borough society. For the first time ever, Micah is holding a public event to recruit "Motion Thinkers" to help fuel a revolutionary new "Indigo" experiment and you have been invited to participate.

Hammerstep's new work takes the form of a series of interactive tests for participants and a thirty-minute immersive and interactive theater performance.

Hammerstep's original dance form acts as a coded language for the future, focusing on the symbolic potential of movement. Along their journey through Micah's Indigo showcase, audience members encounter interactive motion puzzles they must learn and solve in order to progress through the narrative. The performance plays out in a projection mapped, responsive environment that responds to sensory input from both dancers and the audience.

Hammerstep is utilizing Bell Labs' pioneering network-controlled drone research that enables precise tracking and control of drones with millisecond latency responsiveness to ensure the most dynamic interaction with the artists.

REVISITING EXPERIMENTS IN ART AND TECHNOLOGY

Only Human is the result of a partnership between New Museum's NEW INC incubator and Nokia Bell Labs, which facilitates artist residencies and collaborations between artists and engineers. This work is carried out in the tradition of Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), a nonprofit organization originally co-founded by Bell Labs engineers, Billy Klüver and Fred Waldhauser, and artists Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Whitman in the 1960s with the aim of encouraging cross-disciplinary work between the arts and sciences. To pay homage to this legendary organization and its work, the exhibition features two galleries of archival material documenting the origins and activities of E.A.T. from 1960–2001. The materials include "Story of E.A.T.," a firsthand account containing images and text compiled and arranged by Klüver himself, as well as original films of the historic 9 *Evenings: Theatre & Engineering* performances, including performances by Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, Lucinda Childs, Deborah and Alex Hay, and more.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS
Sunday, April 29, 1–7PM
Exhibition Opening

Saturday, May 12, 10AM–6PM
Symposium, Experiments in Art & Technology—Then & Now

Saturdays, May 5, 12 and 19
Performances, *INDIGO GREY: The Micah Grey Experiment*

ABOUT NEW INC

NEW INC was cofounded by Lisa Phillips and Karen Wong in 2014 and is the first museum-led cultural incubator dedicated to supporting innovation, collaboration, and entrepreneurship across art, design, and technology. NEW INC's Director is Julia Kaganskiy.

ABOUT NOKIA BELL LABS

Nokia Bell Labs is the world renowned industrial research arm of Nokia. Over its ninety-year history, Bell Labs has invented many of the foundational technologies that underpin information and communications networks and all digital devices and systems. This research has resulted in eight Nobel Prizes, two Turing Awards, three Japan Prizes, a plethora of National Medals of Science and Engineering, as well as an Oscar, two Grammy awards and an Emmy award for technical innovation. For more information, visit bell-labs.com.

ABOUT MANA NEW MEDIA PROGRAM

Established in 2016, the Mana New Media Program (NMP) is a community-based platform dedicated to supporting the next generation of new media artists. Through ongoing support in Mana's two-million square-foot campus, the program aims to foster innovation, collaboration, and entrepreneurship, and present exhibitions and programming at the intersection of art and new media technology.

ABOUT NEW MUSEUM

The New Museum is the only museum in New York City exclusively devoted to contemporary art. Founded in 1977, the New Museum is a center for exhibitions, information, and documentation about living artists from around the world. From its beginnings as a one-room office on Hudson Street to the inauguration of its first freestanding building on the Bowery designed by SANAA in 2007, the New Museum continues to be a place of experimentation and a hub of new art and new ideas. For more information, visit newmuseum.org.

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