



**WEST COAST PREMIERE  
OF NEW MEDIA ARTISTS**

Experience how big data has  
affected and altered our lives

JANUARY 19 to  
APRIL 15, 2018

Wednesday through Saturday  
12pm to 4pm

**STRINGS:  
DATA AND  
THE SELF**

**Featuring: Heather Dewey-Hagborg • Branger\_Briz  
Amanda Turner Pohan • Jennifer Chan • Shawné Michaelain Holloway**

## What is NEW MEDIA?

A working definition by Joel Kuennen

New media art has come to describe an open-ended genre of artistic practice that utilizes newly developed media technology to produce works of art. Media is a key term here in that it implies that technology is not exterior to human experience, but is used as a tool for human communication and connection. This genre of work includes, among others, digital art, net art, videogame art and bio art, representations of each of these subcategories are included in this exhibition on how data mediates our experience of ourselves.

New technologies come with a blank set of moral imperatives and therefore beg a self-reflexive and self-critical approach to define the technology's cultural potential and limitations. As a result, new media work often takes its own technological systems as the object of inquiry. In her book, *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond: Curatorial Models for Digital Art*, Adjunct Curator of New Media Arts at the Whitney Museum, Christiane Paul succinctly lays out the difficulty and features of new media art within an institutional context: "Like other art forms before it, new media art has shifted the focus from object to process: as an inherently time-based, dynamic, interactive, collaborative, customizable, and variable art form, new media art resists "objectification" and challenges traditional notions of the art object."

In the late 1960s, media theorist Marshall McLuhan's famous edict, "the medium is the message" helped frame what would become one of the most experimental and affective forms of contemporary artistic practice. Video art flourished in the field of conceptual media art.

Critical work like Valie Export's *Facing a Family* (1971) effectively used the medium of television to carry its own critique. The work, which consisted of a TV broadcast in Austria of a family eating dinner while watching television, effectively mirrored the practices of many middle-class families at that time. In addition to self-critical works, video art provided an environment where artists could make work while also experimenting with the medium itself. The video artist Dan Sandin built the first video image processor from 1971 and 1974 to interrogate the potential of the technology. This processor, as recently as the last decade, was still being rebuilt by a class of students each year at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where Sandin built his first version, as a means to introduce new students into a process-based approach to art and technology.

The idea for this exhibition arose from the notion that data is a media unto itself. We relate to our heart by how many beats a minute it makes. We understand our social value through currency holdings. When it comes to our relationship to companies, we are easily abstracted into data points through our buying habits, political and cultural affinities, websites we browse.

The world around us is increasingly made meaningful through the data we accumulate and use to describe ourselves. New media art allows us to better see our changing world and our changing selves.



CMATO's goal is to introduce the community to prominent contemporary artists working in diverse mediums.

*Strings: Data and the Self*, is the West Coast premiere exhibition of groundbreaking new media artists that challenge "traditional" notions of art making.

The artists in the exhibition are known in Paris, London, Chicago and Singapore but are not usually seen in this beautiful hamlet of Thousand Oaks. We have curators Joel Kuennen and Riccardo Zagorodnev to thank for bringing these gifted artists to CMATO.

New Media Art is generally defined as an art movement that began in the 1980s and is still evolving. It is based on technology – more specifically media. It can use the internet, our cell phones, videogames or 3D printing, even genetic testing kits – just to name a few of the approaches. The artistic process is key and use of media is the common denominator.

Kuennen and Zagorodnev, both alumni of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, have curated an interesting journey through the new media landscape. The realization that so much of our life is connected to data is a bit disconcerting. However, the works are so engrossing, almost hypnotic, that the overall experience is pleasurable. This exhibition is challenging, sophisticated and provides the perfect place to reflect and discuss on how data mediates who we are.

We are extremely grateful to our Board of Directors, CMATO Council, Len and Judy Linton, Shawn McCabe and Richard and Joyce Johnson for providing the means for this exceptional exhibition. Special thanks to the City of Thousand Oaks for providing a place for people to gather and experience art together. Thanks to art patrons Larry Janss and Shawn and Letal Skelton, for their steadfast support of visual culture in the Conejo Valley region.

Tish Greenwood  
CMATO Executive Director

# DATA AS TRACE • DATA AS TAG

by Joel Kuennen and Riccardo Zagorodnev

There is currently a case before the Supreme Court, *Carpenter vs. United States*, that is deciding both ownership of one's data as collected by a third party—your service provider—and the government's right to access that information without a warrant. Little case law or congressional regulation has been established thus far on these glaringly important issues. One of the greatest lines of contention that has appeared in the first round of oral argument is the distinction between the information that would be available in the physical search and the information available as held by a third party. The implication being that an individual would be disinclined to allow a third party to hold the most valuable and sensitive information and therefore it is not subject to Fourth Amendment protections.

In short, the government is arguing that law enforcement does have a right to access information stored by a third party without a warrant because people don't value their information sufficiently.

Data is a force and we need to understand the power it holds over us and the power we yet hold over it. To engage with data, the traces we leave behind, we must first look at how it is collected. Our first two artists in STRINGS look at two very different types of traces we leave in the wake of our lives.

**Branger\_Briz** (Nick Briz and Brannon Dorsey) look at the small computers we carry around with us every minute of the day. Smartphones, or any WiFi enabled device, send out probe requests that contain information which, when cross-referenced with public data bases, can be used to map a person's travels throughout the day. This piece doesn't use the geolocation on our phones that we may turn on or off. *Probe Kit, 2015*, takes advantage of a specific vulnerability written into WiFi protocol. This vulnerability is well known to software developers but remains unpatched as it would upend the user-friendly protocol that currently exists, i.e.: you'd have to sign-in to a WiFi network every time you connect.

Much of our data becomes available for the sake of ease. **Heather Dewey-Hagborg** forces us to consider the biological data we leave behind like a piece of gum on the sidewalk or a strand of hair on the bus. (See page 6) *Stranger Visions, 2012-2013*, takes advantage of what is called forensic DNA Phenotyping (FDP), a technology not far removed from the anthropometric stereotyping done by eugenicist Francis Galton who created facial composites of "types" such as: criminal, scientist, Jew. FDP is beginning to be used by police departments in the United States to create "a descriptive profile from any human DNA sample". However, these profiles are general at best and racist at worst. Heather makes the point that "Forensic DNA Phenotyping is simply the latest in a long succession of identity-inscribing technologies which claim to use science to classify types of bodies into socially constructed categories like genre and race."

Data does not only consist of traces left behind, but it increasingly determines who we are. We self-define through tags, flattening our complex and continuously evolving identities into easily indexed profiles with picture, location, and identifying information.

**Shawné Michaelain Holloway's** work, explores the experience of a tagged identity through a project combining sex work and artwork. As a site, her labor intersected with themes of power, identity and the internet. Her triptych *USER IE: ADD-TAGS-TO-DESCRIBE YOURSELF.PNG, PROFILE-PIC.PNG, ABOUT-ME.PNG*, visualizes a layered, imagined and performed identity within the context of the internet. (See page 7) **A Personal Project**, the series of video works she created from her experience as a camgirl/artist explores in depth the complexities of expected identities within these two positions, performer and artist. Viewed collectively, the works locate methods of resistance against the exploitative tendencies of online pornography by metabolizing fetishization.

—continued page 10



## Probe Kit, 2015

Branger\_Briz  
Projector, Computer, Custom  
Software, Antenna  
Image courtesy of the artist



## Branger\_Briz

**Branger\_Briz** is a full service digital agency and lab made up of artists, strategists, educators and programmers bent on articulating contemporary culture. Based in Miami FL, Chicago IL, and Cali, Colombia, they create work that provides context and perspective on the misunderstood aspects of the digital landscape.

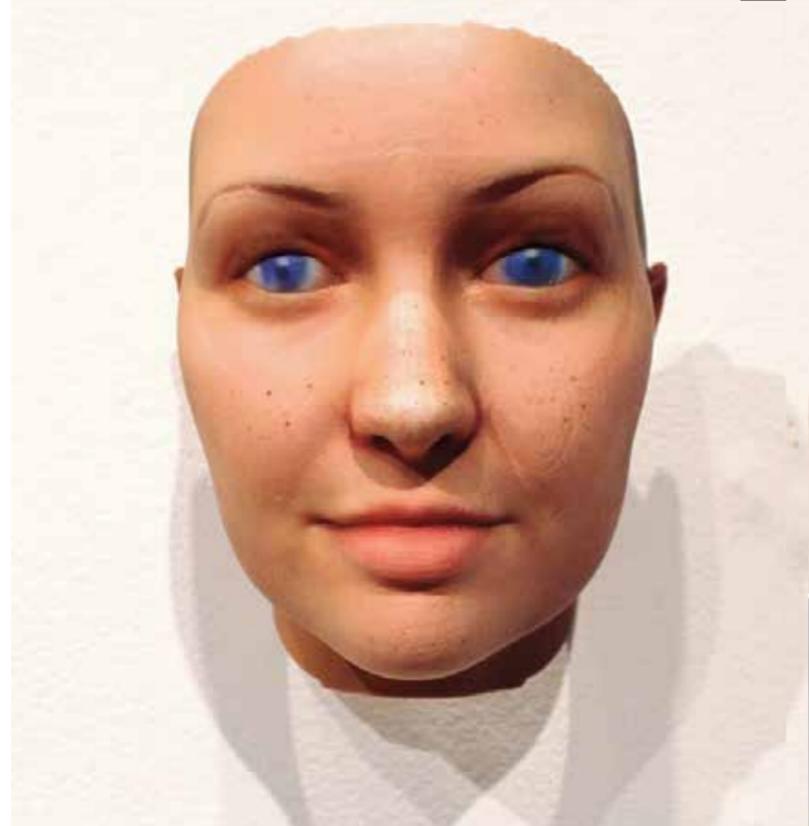
**Brannon Dorsey** is an artist, programmer, and researcher who uses technology and reproducible electronic media to navigate difficult terrain. He employs open software tools to create experiences that excite and empower individuals and collaborative communities rather than create passive users/consumers. Brannon's work encourages a digital literacy that celebrates the truly profound technological era that we now live while remaining skeptical of the ways that this technology is being used on and against us.

**Nick Briz** is a new media artist, educator, and organizer living and working in Chicago, IL. He is critically obsessed with the Internet and focuses his work on digital culture— digital literacy and ecology, netizen rights, glitch art, net art, and remix. He organizes events on these topics (GLI.TC/H, NO-MEDIA), teaches (SAIC, Marwen, www), and produces work independently and commercially with **Branger\_Briz**.

Nick's work has been shown internationally at FILE Media Arts Festival, the Images Festival, the Museum of Moving Image, the Tate, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. He has been featured in on/off-line publications around the world (VICE, Rhizome.org, Fast Company, and El Mundo). His work is distributed through Video Out Distribution as well as openly and freely on the web.

**Heather Dewey-Hagborg** is a transdisciplinary artist and educator who is interested in art as research and critical practice. Her controversial biopolitical art practice includes the project *Stranger Visions* in which she created portrait sculptures from analyses of genetic material (hair, cigarette butts, chewed up gum) collected in public places.

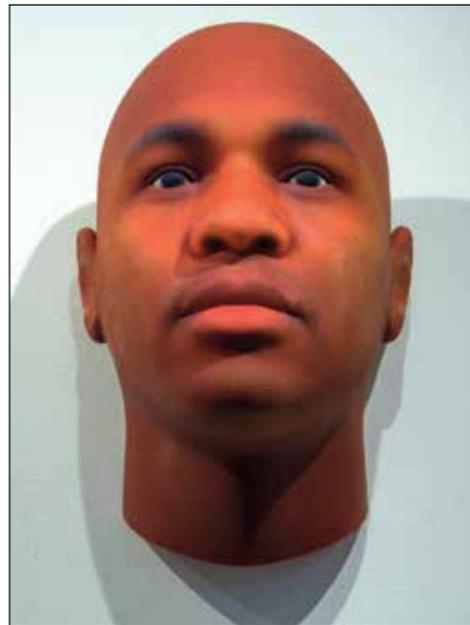
Heather has shown work internationally at events and venues including the World Economic Forum, Shenzhen Urbanism and Architecture Biennale, the New Museum, the Centre Pompidou and PSIMOMA. Her work has been widely discussed in the media, from the New York Times and the BBC to TED and Wired. She is an Assistant Professor of Art and Technology Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a 2016 Creative Capital award grantee in the area of Emerging Fields.



**Self Portrait, 2012**

Collected 6/28/12  
Self-Portrait Heather Dewey-Hagborg  
Found genetic materials, custom software,  
3D prints, documentation  
Image courtesy the Artist / Fridman Gallery

## Heather Dewey-Hagborg



**Sample 7 NYC, 2013**

Collected 1/6/13 1pm  
33 Flatbush Ave. Brooklyn NY  
Heather Dewey-Hagborg  
Found genetic materials, custom software,  
3D prints, documentation  
Image courtesy of the Artist / Fridman Gallery, NY

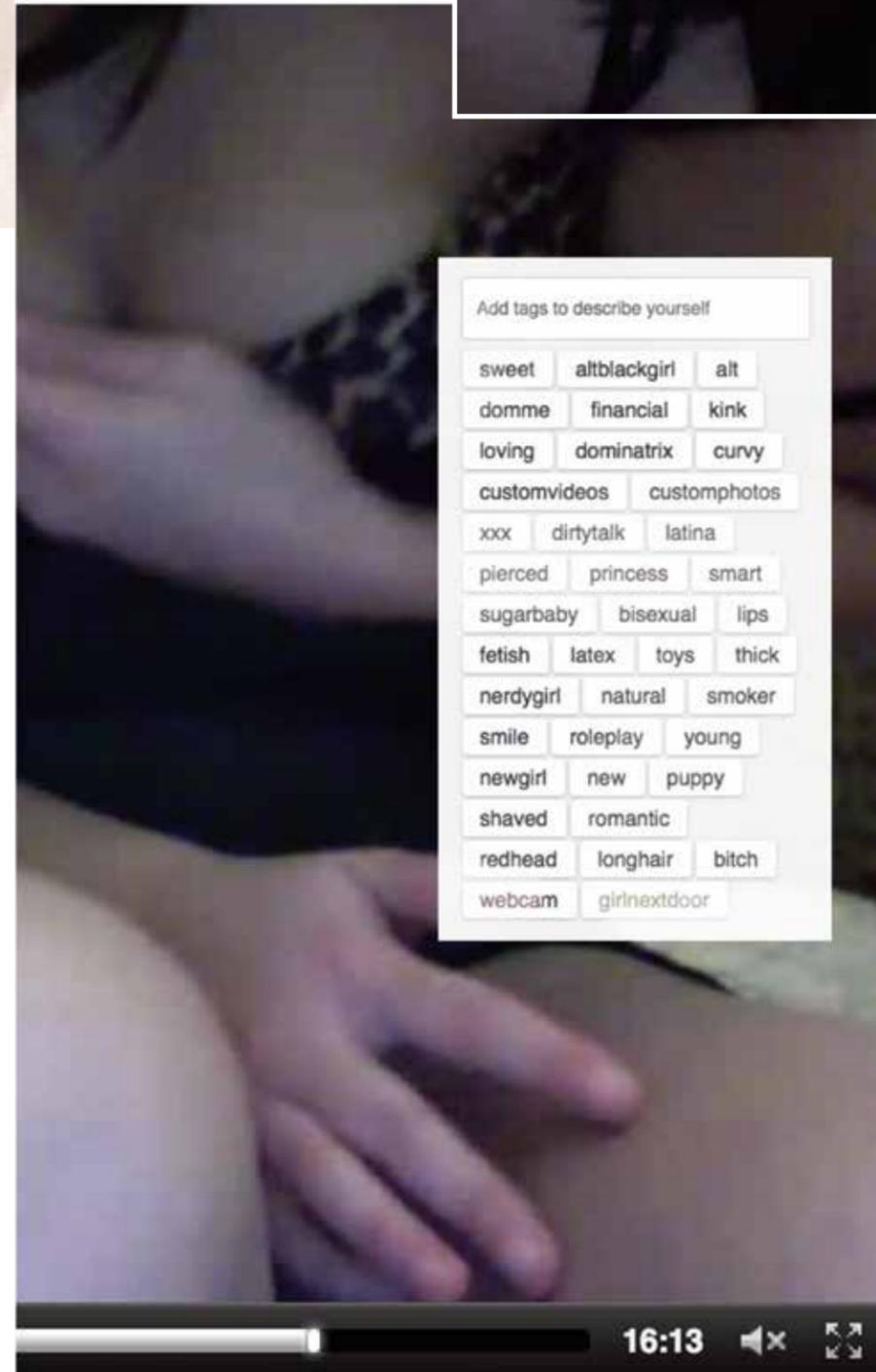


**Sample 3 NYC, 2013**

Collected 1/6/13 12:17pm  
Himrod Street  
Heather Dewey-Hagborg  
Found genetic materials, custom software,  
3D prints, documentation  
Image courtesy of the Artist / Fridman Gallery, NY

**ABOUT-ME.PNG 2017**

Shawné Michaelain Holloway  
Archival inkjet print  
Image courtesy of the Artist



Add tags to describe yourself		
sweet	altblackgirl	alt
domme	financial	kink
loving	dominatrix	curvy
customvideos	customphotos	
xxx	dirtytalk	latina
pierced	princess	smart
sugarbaby	bisexual	lips
fetish	latex	toys
nerdygirl	natural	smoker
smile	roleplay	young
newgirl	new	puppy
shaved	romantic	
redhead	longhair	bitch
webcam	girlnextdoor	

## Shawné Michaelain Holloway

**Shawné Michaelain Holloway** is a Chicago-based new media artist using sound, video, and performance to shape the rhetorics of technology and sexuality into tools for exposing structures of power.

She has spoken and exhibited work internationally in spaces like The New Museum (New York, NY), Sorbus Galleria (Helsinki, Fi), on NTS Radio (London, UK) and was one of the 2017 residents at The Center for Afrofuturist Studies (Iowa City, IA.) She teaches in the New Arts Journalism department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

**ADD-TAGS-TO-DESCRIBE-YOURSELF.PNG 2017**

Shawné Michaelain Holloway  
Archival inkjet Print  
Image courtesy of the Artist

Amanda Turner Pohan received her BFA from The School of Visual Arts and an MFA from Hunter College. Pohan is currently working on *The Linqox Criss Cycle*, a five-part series of installations detailing the journey of *Second Life* avatar Linqox Criss as she slips between digital and physical embodiment. Each iteration manifests as scent, sculpture, sound, text, video and performance within a immersive environment. Through this project, Pohan asks, who is the avatar, where does her body begin and end, how does she thrive, what does she smell like.

In addition to this work, Pohan is founder of TWOFORTY, a loft apartment project space and publishing house in South Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

## Amanda Turner Pohan



**Linqox Criss on Machines, Living and Otherwise, 2018**

Amanda Turner Pohan  
ViewSonic® LCD HD monitor, single track video, Bose® SoundLink Revolve speaker, audio track, Single Syringe Pump 11 Elite and High Pressure Auto-Fill Valve Box by Harvard Apparatus, 50ml Gastight Syringe, KandyPens® Slim vape pen, custom E-liquid for vape pen made of vegetable glycerin and essential oils, Triangle Base Lab Stand, four 2'x4' drop ceiling panels covered in pulverized LCD screen dustg and shredded EconoFlex™ C55 Medium-Firm Foam, yellow vinyl adhesive, latex curtain.  
Image courtesy of the Artist



Jennifer Chan is a Canadian video and media artist and curator based in Toronto. Her work addresses internet pop culture, specifically the representation of masculinity and the various constructions of femininity under the male gaze. Chan co-organized the online exhibition *Body Anxiety* with Leah Schrager, featuring underrepresented artists to challenge the male-dominated internet art space.

She has held solo exhibitions in numerous countries, including *Young Money* at Future Gallery (Berlin), *I'll Show You HD* at transmediale (Berlin), *Sea of Men* at Galleri CC (Malmo), and *New Alpha* at ohmydays (Singapore). In 2013 she contributed a sequence to *The One Minutes* (commissioned by the Sandberg Institute) as part of *Ways of Something*, a net artists' remake of *John Berger's Ways Of Seeing* compiled by Lorna Mills. The video has screened at ICA London, Fabrica UK, MenShing Museum (Beijing), Woolloomooloo (Taipei), and SongEun Art Space (South Korea), and later collected by the Whitney Museum.

## Jennifer Chan

Above and Below:  
**Austerity, 2016**  
Digital Video, 5:15  
Image courtesy of the Artist.

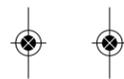


In a turn towards the simulated self, **Amanda Turner Pohan's** *The Living Body Archive of Linqox Criss, 2016*, traces the arc of MF, a queer, cis-male user in the online world of Second Life. (See page 8) Using screen recordings, voice actors, Greek mythology, philosophy and aerosoles, Pohan's installation gestures towards the liberating potential of technological platforms and the implications of a fluid conception of identity and gender. Biometric data collected from both MF and the avatar was translated into a scent that is dispersed through the gallery by a vaporizer and respirator assemblage. This allows MF and Linqox to saturate the gallery and permeate the visitor's physical body, merging with their virtual identity physically.

**Jennifer Chan's** practice is steeped within the visual culture of the internet. *Austerity, 2015*, made in response to the Great Recession in the European Union criticizes the way in which austerity measures are used to maintain lifestyles that require exploitative economic practices. In many ways the project of the European Union represented the hopes and possible solutions of a global society. The web, popularized shortly after the introduction of the Euro in 1995, developed alongside this period of increased wealth and decreased barriers to travel. Displaying excess became a norm online. (See page 9) By using videos

uploaded to YouTube and other video platforms, Jennifer collages biting critiques of advanced capitalism as it appears in the streams of online visual culture. *Austerity* incorporates footage from a Greek vacation, a destination wedding, a trans-european motorcycle trip and haunting imagery from California wildfires to question the role and responsibilities of transnational economies. *Austerity* captures a strangely upbeat culture in the face of oppression, destruction, violence and exploitation.

The artists in **STRINGS** address, incrementally, the monumental question of how the subject is defined in an age when every dimension and component of the global environment is atomized and mined for value. The mass collection of data and the layered algorithms that mine them force us to consider the latent value of the most insignificant gestures. We have already begun to see self-censorship as a response to these pervasive surveillance networks as well as massive shifts in information value systems. We are at a point where individuals risk losing the ability to orient themselves within the multitude of anesthetizing data streams, a landscape where the only thing that becomes meaningful is the abstract relationship between data sets.



**Joel Kuennen** is an arts writer and curator based in Brooklyn, NY. He is the Chief Operations Officer and a Senior Editor at ArtSlant.com. He received his MA in Visual and Critical Studies at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2010. In 2012, he was a contributor and an editor of The Contemporary Visual Studies Reader in collaboration with James Elkins, Maureen Burns, Alicia Chester, and Kristi McGuire. His thesis at the School of the Art Institute Chicago explored conditions of subjectivity as constructed through spatial relationships. His current research interests are centered around digital selves, new media art,

the intersection of politics and cultural production, and online art communities. He has curated the ArtSlant Prize exhibition since 2012.

**Riccardo Zagorodnev** is an artist and curator living in Brooklyn New York. He holds a BFA with an emphasis in Visual Critical Studies from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His projects address information politics, the hidden dimensions of power structures, and the implications nascent technologies have on methods of societal organization.

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