

LISSON GALLERY

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## Press Release

# *D*IFFERENCE *E*NGINE

Curated by Cory Arcangel and Tina Kukielski

June 29 – August 10, 2018

504 W 24th Street, New York

Opening: June 28, 6 – 8pm

Lisson Gallery presents *Difference Engine*, an exhibition curated by Cory Arcangel and Tina Kukielski.

Emerging from two poles—the machine’s mechanistic logic on the one hand and the fetishistic objectivity of surrealism at the other—the works in *Difference Engine* explore the art of contradiction.

André Breton’s surrealist doctrine of objective chance drew inspiration from a now well-known, singular quote by the young poet Comte de Lautréamont who tragically died at the age of twenty-four: “The chance encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table.” *Difference Engine* explores a similar conceit, ripe with the undercurrents of our twenty-first century technological narcissism set in stark contrast to its utopian possibilities.

The exhibition’s title is taken from Charles Babbage’s name for his invention of a calculating engine powered by a cranking handle that, upon its completion in 1832, would be the first automated mechanical calculator. Furthering the allusion, a 1990 sci-fi novel of the same name by William Gibson and Bruce Sterling would play a significant role in the setting off of the genre of steampunk through its envisioning of a speculative reality sprung from this historical turning point.

The works in *Difference Engine* embrace an uncanny or nauseated condition that is nonetheless replete with humor and comic relief. The miracle and misery of the information age is explored. The beauty and grotesque of pop syncopates against a curious and contradictory surrealist imaginary. Artists include Cory Arcangel, Carol Bove, Jacob Ciocci, Aleksandra Domanović, Lonnie Holley, Jamian Juliano-Villani, JODI, Konrad Klapheck, Guthrie Lonergan, Michel Majerus, Jayson Musson, Deborah Remington, Hayley Silverman, Jessie Stead, Paul Thek and Ernest Trova.

### About the curators

**Cory Arcangel** is a leading exponent of technology-based art, drawn to video games and software for their ability to rapidly formulate new communities and traditions and, equally, their speed of obsolescence. It was in 1996, while studying classical guitar at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, that he first had a high-speed Internet connection – inspiring him to major in music technology and start learning to code. Both music and coding remain his key tools for interrogating the stated purpose of software and gadgets. In *Super Mario Clouds* (2002), for example, he disabled the vintage Nintendo game to leave only the iconic backdrop of blue sky and clouds; in *Drei Klavierstücke op.11* (2009) Arcangel recreated Arnold Schoenberg’s 1909 score of the same name by editing together YouTube clips of cats playing pianos, note for note, paw by paw. Outcomes can be surprising, funny and poignant, whether in the final form of installation, video, printed media or music composition, in the gallery or on the world wide web. Reconfiguring web

design and hacking as artistic practice, Arcangel remains faithful to open source culture and makes his work and methods available online, thus superimposing a perpetual question-mark as to the value of the art object.

Arcangel was born in Buffalo, New York in 1978 and lives and works in Stravanger, Norway and Brooklyn, New York. He received a BM from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in 2000. He is the youngest artist since Bruce Nauman to have been given a full floor solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2011). Arcangel has had major solo exhibitions at Reykjavik Art Museum, Reykjavik, GAMeC, Bergamo and Espace Louis Vuitton München, Munich (all 2015); Herning Museum of Contemporary Art (2014); Fondation DHC/Art, Montreal (2013); Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2013); Barbican Art Gallery, London (2011); Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2010) and Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami (2010). He was awarded the 2015 Kino der Kunst Award for the Filmic Ouvre. In 2014, he launched Arcangel Surfware, a merchandise and publishing imprint located at [www.arcangelsurfware.biz](http://www.arcangelsurfware.biz); also in 2014, Penguin published his first novel, *Working on My Novel*.

**Tina Kukielski** is the Executive Director and Chief Curator of Art21, which celebrates its 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary as the global leader in thought-provoking digital content this year. Kukielski is Curator and Executive Producer of Art21's upcoming TV program *Art in the Twenty-First Century* including artists Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Olafur Eliasson, David Goldblatt, Katy Grannan, Nicholas Hlobo, Hiwa K, Lynn Hershman Leeson, Zanele Muholi, Robin Rhode, Susan Philipsz, Stephanie Sjuuco and the Center for Creative Growth. Kukielski joined Art21 in 2016, after more than thirteen years as a contemporary art curator. She was a co-curator of the acclaimed *2013 Carnegie International*, bringing together 35 established and emerging artists from 19 different countries including the work of Sadie Benning, Nicole Eisenman, Rodney Graham, Rokni Haerizadeh, Mark Leckey, Pedro Reyes, Taryn Simon, Frances Stark, Henry Taylor, and Erika Verzutti among others. During her time at the Whitney Museum of American Art from 2002-2010, she worked to acquire and mount exhibitions by a wide range of celebrated contemporary artists. As lead curator on the Hillman Photography Initiative at the Carnegie Museum of Art, Kukielski launched a number of digital initiatives and films series.

Kukielski is a contributor to the 2015 anthology on digital art, *Mass Effect: Internet Art in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. She has been a visiting critic at Columbia, Yale, Princeton, and Carnegie Mellon, and has taught courses in the MFA programs at Parsons School of Design and the University of Hartford. In 2014, Arcangel and Kukielski co-produced a documentary film about Andy Warhol, documenting a digital conservation project which brought renewed attention to nearly forgotten artworks that Warhol made on an Amiga personal computer in 1985. The idea for the project came out of the exhibition Kukielski curated at the Carnegie Museum of Art entitled *Cory Arcangel: Masters* (2013).

### **About Lisson Gallery**

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and develops 59 international artists across two exhibition spaces in London and two in New York. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie, to the public for the first time. In addition to a number of renowned artist estates, including Roy Colmer, the Leon Polk Smith Foundation and the John Latham Foundation, the gallery represents leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller and Tatsuo Miyajima. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

### **For press inquiries, please contact**

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