

# SAN JOSE MUSEUM OF ART

## HITO STEYERL'S LANDMARK VIDEO *FACTORY OF THE SUN* TO OPEN AT THE SAN JOSÉ MUSEUM OF ART ON AUGUST 6, 2021

For Immediate Release

San José, California (April 29, 2021; updated August 3, 2021)— Beginning August 6, 2021, the San José Museum of Art (SJMA) presents Hito Steyerl's landmark video installation *Factory of the Sun*. This immersive work debuted at the Venice Biennale in 2015 and is in SJMA's permanent collection, co-acquired with the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago in 2017.



“We were delighted to partner with the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, to acquire *Factory of the Sun* and ensure its vitality far into the future,” said S. Sayre Batton, Oshman Executive Director, San José Museum of Art. “Hito Steyerl invites viewers to reflect on important issues of our time. We are excited to activate the Museum’s galleries this summer with her work and look forward to the discussions that will occur as a result of this presentation.”

Organized by Kathryn Wade, SJMA assistant curator, this will be the Museum’s inaugural presentation of *Factory of the Sun*. Upon entry into the immersive installation, audiences will feel as though they’ve been transported into a lurid cyberspace glowing in a grid of blue LED lights. On screen, the distinctions between reality and fiction dissolve in a montage of YouTube dance videos, drone surveillance footage, video games, fictitious news, and real documentation of international student uprisings. Notions of time and space expand and collapse within this virtual world, reflecting our contemporary reality and the ceaseless transmission of images and information (and misinformation) around the globe.

“*Factory of the Sun* is a truly immersive experience,” shared Wade. “It creates an imaginative reality where modern warfare, corporate culture, and anti-capitalist resistance movements are played out by digitally-embodied characters. This exploration of the flow of data in our current digital landscape is a reflection on how today, we knowingly surrender our personal data to corporate interest so that we might participate, often delightfully, in the digital landscape.”

*Factory of the Sun* tells a surreal story of workers whose forced dance moves in a motion capture studio are turned into artificial sunshine. The story is based on an actual YouTube phenomenon (a studio assistant’s brother whose viral homemade dance videos were used as a model for Japanese anime characters) and a news story about an experiment at CERN—the European Organization for Nuclear Research facility that claimed to have measured a particle traveling faster than the speed of light.

Inspired by a quote from Donna Haraway’s *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) describing machines as “made of pure sunlight,” Steyerl narrates in the video: “Our machines are made of pure sunlight. Electromagnetic frequencies. Light pumping through fiberglass cables. The sun is our factory.” The premise of machines made of pure sunlight is not a romantic one for the artist who has long attuned herself to the power of image and their electronic reproduction to manipulate our worldview.

Hito Steyerl (b. 1966, Munich, Germany) is a filmmaker, visual artist, writer, and innovator of the essay documentary. She is currently a professor of New Media Art at the University of the Arts, Berlin, where she co-founded the Research Center for Proxy Politics, together with Vera Tollmann and Boaz Levin. Steyerl has produced a variety of work as a filmmaker and author in the field of essayist documentary, filmography, and post-colonial critique, both as a producer and theorist. Steyerl attended the Japan Institute of the Moving Image and University of Television and Film Munich and holds a PhD in Philosophy from the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. She participated in Manifesta 5 (2004) and represented Germany in the 56<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale (2015). Steyerl has exhibited widely in solo and group shows since this time, notably at Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (2015); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2016); and Centre Pompidou (2020). Steyerl is widely published in periodicals, newspapers, journals, and anthologies, as well as her own publications, including the 2017 critically acclaimed *Duty Free Art: Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War*.

## **PROGRAMMING**

### **The Identity Factory**

August 5, 2021–Fall 2022

Online at [newart.city/show/the-identity-factory](http://newart.city/show/the-identity-factory)

Further exploring ideas of labor in the digital economy, the Identity Factory is a virtual interactive environment where users construct image-based identities for online distribution. This virtual interpretive commission was designed and developed by New Art City with students from San José State University's Art and Art History Department. It is available beginning August 5, 2021 at [newart.city/show/the-identity-factory](http://newart.city/show/the-identity-factory).

New Art City is an online multiplayer exhibition space for digital art and performance. They are an artist-run organization dedicated to supporting artists, providing virtual space for those who are denied physical space, and amplifying the work of those who face systemic injustice.

### **Artists in Conversation: Hito Steyerl and Trevor Paglen**

October 12, 2021 | 12pm PDT

Online. [sjmusart.org/steyerlpaglen](http://sjmusart.org/steyerlpaglen)

Join us for a conversation between artists Hito Steyerl and Trevor Paglen, presented in conjunction with their respective exhibitions at SJMA: *Factory of the Sun* (on view August 6, 2021–Fall 2022) and *Beta Space* (on view November 5, 2021–Fall 2022).

### **SUPPORT**

Hito Steyerl: *Factory of the Sun* is supported by the SJMA Exhibitions Fund, with generous contributions from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the Lipman Family Foundation, Ian Reinhard, and Mr. Cole Harrell and Dr. Tai-Heng Cheng.

Operations and programs at the San José Museum of Art are made possible by generous support from the Museum's Board of Trustees, a Cultural Affairs Grant from the City of San José, the Lipman Family Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Richard A. Karp Charitable Foundation, Yvonne and Mike Nevens, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, The Yellow Chair Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the SJMA Director's Council and Council of 100, the San José Museum of Art Endowment Fund established by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation at the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and The William Randolph Hearst Foundation.

###

### **SAN JOSÉ MUSEUM OF ART**

SJMA is located at 110 South Market Street in downtown San José, California. The Museum is open Friday through Sunday, 11am to 5pm and until 8pm or later on the first Friday of each month. SJMA has implemented a dedicated hour of each day for our most vulnerable guests to enjoy the galleries, inviting seniors, those who are pregnant, and those with underlying health concerns as determined by CDC guidelines, to visit SJMA Friday through Sunday, 11am–12pm. For up-to-date information about SJMA, visit [SanJoseMuseumofArt.org](http://SanJoseMuseumofArt.org). Admission is \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors, and free to members, college students, youth and children ages 17 and under, and school teachers (with valid ID). For more information, call 408.271.6840 or visit [SanJoseMuseumofArt.org](http://SanJoseMuseumofArt.org).

### **PRESS CONTACTS**

Melanie Samay, [msamay@sjmusart.org](mailto:msamay@sjmusart.org), 415.722.0555

Frederick Liang, [fliang@sjmusart.org](mailto:fliang@sjmusart.org)

### **PRESS IMAGES**

[flickr.com/photos/sjma/1118076111/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/sjma/1118076111/)

### **IMAGE CREDIT**

Hito Steyerl, *Factory of the Sun*, 2015. Single channel high-definition video, environment, luminescent LED grid, beach chairs, 23 minutes. Installation view from Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, 2015. Image courtesy of the Artist, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York and Esther Schipper, Berlin. Photography by Jorit Aust.