

LAUREN LEE MCCARTHY

Que puis-je pour vous ?

EXHIBITION

friday
JUNE 21
sunday
SEPT 08

Ⓞ from June 21
to July 5
from Tuesday to
Saturday: 2.00
pm > 7.00 pm,
Sunday: 3.00 pm
> 7.00 pm
Closed on Monday

from July 6
to September 8
from Tuesday to
Sunday: 2.00 pm
> 7.00 pm
Closed on Monday

€ free entrance

Opening
June 20, 6.30 pm

Le Lieu Unique
Quai Ferdinand-
Favre, 44000
Nantes (France)

Que puis-je pour vous ? (What can I do for you?) is the first solo exhibition in France by Californian artist Lauren Lee McCarthy, whose installations, videos, and digital works have been exhibited worldwide. Conceived and designed by French artist and curator Thierry Fournier, the exhibition brings together installations, videos, interactive works, texts, and images in a large-scale display.

Lauren Lee McCarthy creates situations in which she frequently takes the place of devices (personal assistants, AIs, even fictitious surrogate mothers...) by dialoguing with their users and following their orders. By taking on these roles, Lauren Lee McCarthy brings out the human where we least expect it, and raises universal and highly relevant questions about care, attention, otherness, and power. The performative dimension of her work is therefore central, in both installations and videos: the artist involves the audience and always puts herself personally at stake (and at risk), being both the author and the experimenter of the situations she stages.

For example, in *LAUREN*, Lauren Lee McCarthy invites

people to install a personal assistant similar to Amazon's Alexa in their homes, with the fundamental difference that it is not driven by software but by the artist herself, present at a distance and speaking in a synthesized voice. She watches over them, adjusts the heating, advises them on haircuts, sleeps at the same times, answers any question as quickly as possible. The protocol of these interventions is similar to computer code. In another work (*IA Suzie*), she uses a similar apparatus, but with an elderly person, having to alert her to her health routine and her medication. What began as a question of surveillance and the presence of others in one's private space, takes on an even more dizzying dimension of solitude and responsibility. In another performance, documented

in video (*Social Turkers*), the artist pushes this ventriloquist logic to absurd extremes, meeting potential love partners with the OK Cupid dating app, but having what she says on her dates dictated to her by click workers who intervene remotely.

While these works can be seen as a critique of a technician culture, Lauren Lee McCarthy claims that her works also offer a singular experience of connection with others, in all its dimensions, including positive ones, as with *Social Turkers*, through which she met the man who went on to become her partner.

In this sense, it seems that her approach powerfully evokes *what we expect* from our relationships, the way they are

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mediated, filtered, or transformed by technology, and the resulting consequences for our personal and social lives. This is particularly true when it's a real person talking to us, through what only seemed to be an interface.

The exhibition features a number of interactive works, installations, and videos, in a scenography that deploys and amplifies the artist's domestic aesthetic — as if the

architecture of Le Lieu Unique were transformed into a film studio or a furniture superstore, with banners, floor markings, and shelves, fake apartments and furniture on trial. The space is punctuated by questions and large format images of the artist extracted from the works, present everywhere like a character invading consciousness and questioning control. The entire exhibition evokes a fictional space, where the boundaries between

technology and humanity, intimacy and public life, are constantly blurred.

Thierry Fournier, curator

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Exhibition produced with the support of the Espace Multimédia Gantner (France) and UCLA - University of California, Los Angeles



Saliva, Lauren Lee McCarthy, 2022-Ongoing, *Can You See Me Now*. AIA, Zurich. Photo credit: Carla Schleiffer

Lauren Lee McCarthy

Lauren Lee McCarthy is an artist that explores social relationships in the midst of automation, surveillance, and algorithmic living. Her participatory practice spans media including software, electronics, internet, film, photography, and installation.

Her works consist of performances inviting viewers to engage. To remote control her dates. To be followed. To welcome her in as their human smart home. To attend a party hosted by artificial intelligence. In these interactions, there is a reciprocal risk taking and vulnerability, as performer and audience are both challenged to relinquish control, both implicated, as each reformulate their own relationship to the systems that govern our lives.

She has received grants and residencies from Creative Capital, United States Artists, LACMA, Sundance, Eyebeam, Pioneer Works, Autodesk, and Ars Electronica. Her work *SOMEONE* was awarded the Ars Electronica Golden Nica and the Japan Media Arts Social Impact Award, and her work *LAUREN* was awarded the IDFA Award for Immersive Non-Fiction.

McCarthy's work has been exhibited internationally, including at the Barbican Centre, Fotomuseum Winterthur, Seoul Museum of Art, Chronus Art Center, SIGGRAPH, Onassis Cultural Center, and the Japan Media Arts Festival.

She is also the creator of p5.js, an open-source art and education platform that prioritizes access and diversity in learning to code, with over 10 million users. She expanded on this work in her role from 2015–21 on the Board of Directors for the Processing Foundation, whose mission is to serve those who have historically not had access to the fields of technology, code, and art in learning software and visual literacy. McCarthy is a Professor at UCLA Design Media Arts.

Lauren Lee McCarthy lives and works in Los Angeles.

lauren-mccarthy.com



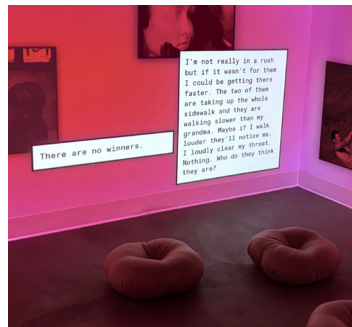
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Curator of the exhibition: Thierry Fournier

Thierry Fournier is an artist, curator, author, and teacher. Trained as an architect, he is a graduate of the École nationale supérieure d'architecture de Lyon. His practice addresses issues of otherness, co-presence, and sociality through a wide range of often digital media: installations, networked works, photography, video, and drawing. His work is regularly exhibited in France and abroad.

His curatorial approach addresses similar questions on a collective scale. Recent exhibitions include: *This Land Is Your Land* (Château de Goutelas 2022); *Selphish*, which included Lauren Lee McCarthy (Mécènes du Sud Montpellier-Sète 2020 with Pau Waelder); Collection Artem (first French public art school collection in Nancy from 2015 to 2020), *The Watchers* (Mori Tower, Tokyo, 2019); *Andrès Baron* (Cité internationale des arts 2018). With J. Emil Sennewald, he co-directed the EnsadLab Displays curatorial research workshop at ENSAD, and now teaches L'Exercice du regard contemporary art workshop at Sciences Po Paris. He is a member of C-E-A, Commissaires d'Exposition Associés.

As an author, Thierry Fournier has written on numerous artists and exhibitions. He is artistic director and co-coordinator of the international journal *antiAtlas Journal*, which addresses the contemporary border stakes and forms. He is frequently invited as an editorial designer by art and humanities research groups (Aix-Marseille University, CNRS IREMAM, Leonardo Olats, Institut Mines-Telecom). His recent publications include *Au Capa, un lieu d'art à la Maladrerie, Aubervilliers* with Juliette Fontaine and *La Main Invisible* (Nancy, Empreintes et Digitales).

A campaigner for fairer working conditions for art workers, in 2014 Thierry Fournier co-founded and co-led the group *Économie Solidaire de l'Art*, similar to the American organisation W.A.G.E. He is now pursuing a similar project within the National Network of Hybrid Arts and Digital Cultures (Haconum).

Thierry Fournier lives and works in the Perche area, France.

thierryfournier.net

Note: in 2023, Lauren Lee McCarthy's practice was the subject of an article coordinated by Thierry Fournier in the journal *antiatlas-journal.net*

— Click on the images to find out more about the different projects

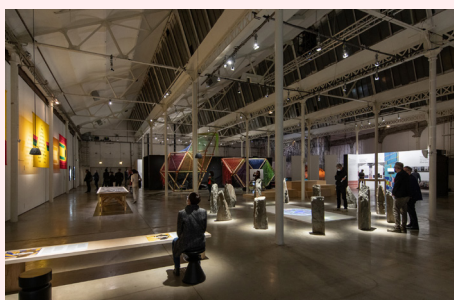
- 1. *LAUREN*, 2017–Ongoing. Photo credit: Lauren Lee McCarthy
- 2. *I heard TALKING IS DANGEROUS*, Lauren Lee McCarthy (still from the video)
- 3. *The Intended Parents (Surrogate)*, Lauren Lee McCarthy, 2020–Ongoing. Photo credit: David Leonard
- 4. *Hysterical (Surrogate)*, Lauren Lee McCarthy, 2022. Photo credit: Gabriel Noguez
- 5. *The Changing Room*, Lauren Lee McCarthy, 2021, Ogden Contemporary Arts, Ogden, Utah. Photo credit: Lauren Lee McCarthy
- 6. *The Changing Room*, Lauren Lee McCarthy (still from the video)
- 7. *The Changing Room*, Lauren Lee McCarthy, 2021, Ogden Contemporary Arts, Ogden, Utah. Photo credit: Cam McLeod
- 8. *Social Turks*, Lauren Lee McCarthy (still from the video).

Headed by Eli Commins since April 2021, le Lieu Unique is internationally recognized for its spirit of curiosity in the different artistic domains: visual arts, theatre, dance, music, but also literature, philosophy, and digital culture. With its overlapping atmospheres, next to its spaces reserved for artistic creation, le Lieu Unique also houses a number of other activities which make it an essential spot in Nantes.

Le Lieu Unique

Quai Ferdinand-Favre, Nantes (France)

www.lelieuunique.com/en



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