

LACMA Introduces Art + Technology Lab

Offering artists grants and lab space to experiment with new technologies

(Los Angeles—December 10, 2013) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) announces its Art + Technology initiative, a new program and lab space that promotes innovative ideas and fosters collaboration across disciplines and industries. The endeavor will award grants, in-kind support, and facilities at the museum to help artists take purposeful risks in order to explore new boundaries in both art and science. The Art + Technology Lab and artist projects at LACMA are made possible by Accenture, DAQRI, and NVIDIA, with additional support from Google and SpaceX. A grant from the Los Angeles County Productivity Investment Fund is supporting the public lab at the museum to house the initiative, including artist demos and public programming.

“In 1967, LACMA introduced the Art and Technology program to inspire collaboration with artists and industry,” said Michael Govan, LACMA’s CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director. “Nearly 50 years later, we’ve updated the program to encompass the entrepreneurial spirit redefining so many industries. The Art + Technology Lab is designed to be an open and impartial space for artists to explore new frontiers.”

Advisory Board member and SpaceX president and COO Gwynne Shotwell said, “Artists, technologists, and engineers are all innate creators, and the results of this initiative will be inspiring.”

The original Art and Technology program at LACMA (1967–71) paired prominent global artists such as Robert Irwin, James Turrell, Claes Oldenberg, and Andy Warhol with major technology and engineering corporations. The impact of that exhibition, which was presented at EXPO '70 in Osaka, Japan and LACMA in 1971, is still recognized by artists and scholars as a landmark moment in the history of art in Los Angeles and beyond. The new Art + Technology Lab is inspired by similar principles and will encourage new collaborations between artists and technology innovators in an independent lab setting.

The Request for Proposals (RFP) is available online at lacma.org/Lab. Interested artists and artist collectives should submit their initial proposal by January 27, 2014. With the support of the Advisory Board and LACMA, grant recipients will pursue new interactive projects to be presented at the museum. Prototypes, case studies, and data resulting from Art + Technology projects will also be published online.

“We're enthusiastic in our support of LACMA's Art + Technology Lab,” said Thomas

Williams, Google Senior Director of Engineering and Los Angeles Site Director. "It's daring and intriguing as a publicly accessible experiment between two worlds that can be well served by spending more time with each other."

The Art + Technology Lab will be located in LACMA's newly renovated Balch Research Library, transformed to house the project with support from the Los Angeles County Productivity Investment Fund. The Lab can accommodate up to 30 participants for hands-on workshops and public programs, including talks and demonstrations by artists and technologists in residence. Additional Art + Technology programming, including lectures, film screenings, and activities for students and families, will take place throughout LACMA's campus.

"LACMA has an established history of pairing artists and technologists to create projects that advance public understanding of both disciplines. The Commission unanimously approved funding for LACMA's Art + Technology Lab to continue this history and expose the public to meaningful experiments with emerging technologies," said Victoria Pipkin Lane, Executive Director, Quality and Productivity Commission, County of Los Angeles.

"LACMA is on the cutting edge of new ideas for the 21st century, and we are proud to play a role in helping them achieve their goals," added Edward T. McIntyre, Chair, Quality and Productivity Commission, County of Los Angeles.

The program is made possible by:



Additional support is provided by:



For more information, visit lacma.org/Lab

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Art + Technology Lab

LACMA reinvents its 1967 program as the Art + Technology Lab, featuring:

- A public Request for Proposals (RFP). The original program curators directly recruited known artists for collaborations. Today's Lab will include artists selected by committee review and will also allow for direct recruitment.
- A Lab at LACMA. The original program embedded artists within corporate settings. The new format enables artists to focus on their practice while working within the context of an encyclopedic art museum.
- Safe-to-fail environment. The original program culminated with a LACMA exhibition; additionally, several installations were also part of EXPO '70 in Osaka, Japan. Projects created within today's Lab do not have a predetermined deadline for display, enabling artists to consider bolder endeavors.
- Ongoing public engagement. One of the primary goals of the Lab is to inspire a new generation of artists and technologists. The Lab will offer ongoing public engagement through on-campus tours and educational programs at LACMA.
- Metrics of success. The results of the Lab will be measured by a broader range of metrics including cultural and educational intent.

LACMA's original Art + Technology initiative

"The program was conceived five years ago by Maurice Tuchman, the museum's 34-year-old senior curator. His idea was to persuade U.S. firms to place their technical resources and a bit of their cash at the disposal of a group of artists in order to give those artists a chance to construct ambitious works beyond the technological limits of their own studios. A total of 76 artists were introduced to a list of companies that ranged from Kaiser Steel to Ampex, from General Electric to Disneyland. Reactions to the proposed matings ranged from disdain to alarm. But eventually some 20 projects were realized.

New Metaphor. Ever since the Futurists declared a racing car to be more beautiful than the Winged Victory of Samothrace, artists have thought about connecting their work to the Faustian energies of 20th-century technology. Never has the dream become more urgent than in today's electronically conditioned society. It is a fundamental issue because the very idea of 'experiment,' endlessly declared to be the founding principle of modern art, is really a metaphor drawn from science and industry. The problem is that industrial experiment radically changes the world, whereas artistic experiment does so only marginally and for a minority. In 1500 an artist like Leonardo could know, and even contribute to, the whole technology of his culture. Not today; the roles of artist and technologist have split, so that art —like kinetic art in the '60s—has had to feed off scientific scraps. One of the revealing

ironies of the 'A. and T.' program was that some artists who moved into areas like aerospace and computers could not even form the necessary questions, let alone use the results, of advanced research. Hence the need for collaboration if art is not to remain in an inefficient relationship with technological culture. This was the rationale of 'Art and Technology'—to widen artists' choices and enrich the vocabulary of art.” — Time, June 28, 1971

The role of the artist

“One of the characterizing sentiments expressed by both those artists and scientist/engineers who are resistive to an information or systems esthetic, has to do with the suspicion harbored by virtually everyone at times that we are all victims of a technocratic macrostructure over which no one or no institution has real control. In the light of this inescapably sinister possibility, the traditional privilege enjoyed by the artist to function independently, and to remain, in a sense, one of the last freelance agents in society, is not easily relinquished.” — Jane Livingston, co-curator (with Maurice Tuchman) of the original 1967 Art and Technology program

On art and technology as catalysts

“The scientist has reserved the universe of the unknown as his place. What the artist has to reveal seems to be of a different order—but it probably isn't, in the end.” — James Turrell

“Forty-four years ago Turrell and Robert Irwin collaborated on a ganzfeld installation for LACMA's 'Art and Technology' initiative. They were assisted by Ed Wortz, a Garrett Corporation psychologist who did human-factors engineering for NASA missions. In August 1969 Turrell walked off the project, and the ganzfeld installation was never realized. Since then the Turrell-Irwin-Wortz collaboration has taken on mythic dimensions as the greatest light and space work that never was. Turrell's recent series of perception cells are the closest approximation to it.”

— ArtInfo, April 21, 2013

LACMA today

“Seven years after he took over as director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Michael Govan has transformed it from an also-ran to downtown's more glamorous Museum of Contemporary Art into Southern California's dominant cultural organization. Annual attendance has doubled to 1.2 million since his arrival, and during his tenure the museum has added more than 14,000 works to its collection. He has enlarged the LACMA board to include Barbra Streisand, producer Brian Grazer, and such Hollywood execs as former Warner Bros. chairman Terry Semel, CAA's Bryan Lourd, and Paramount's Brad Grey, connecting the local industry to the fine arts in a way few L.A. cultural institutions previously had. If Govan has his way, it's only the start of an ambitious reinvention of LACMA.”

— The Hollywood Reporter, October 31, 2013

About LACMA

Since its inception in 1965, LACMA has been devoted to collecting works of art that span both history and geography, in addition to representing Los Angeles's uniquely diverse population. Today LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection that includes over 120,000 objects dating from antiquity to the present, encompassing the geographic world and nearly the entire history of art. Among the museum's strengths are its holdings of Asian art, Latin American art, ranging from pre-Columbian masterpieces to works by leading modern and contemporary artists; and Islamic art, of which LACMA hosts one of the most significant collections in the world. A museum of international stature as well as a vital part of Southern California, LACMA shares its vast collections through exhibitions, public programs, and research facilities that attract over a million visitors annually, in addition to serving millions through digital initiatives, such as online collections, scholarly catalogues, and interactive engagement at lacma.org. Situated in Hancock Park on over 20 acres in the heart of Los Angeles, LACMA is located between the ocean and downtown.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. lacma.org

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