

Exhibition: *Christian Marclay: Sound Stories*

On View: August 25–November 11, 2019

Location: Art of the Americas Building, Plaza Level



(Los Angeles, CA—July 19, 2019) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) in collaboration with Snapchat presents the U.S. premiere of *Christian Marclay: Sound Stories*, an immersive audiovisual exhibition fusing art and technology. The project, a collaboration between the artist and Snapchat, draws on the sounds and images of everyday life found on the multimedia messaging app Snapchat. Using algorithms created by a team of engineers at Snap Inc., Marclay experimented with millions of publicly posted Snapchat videos to create five immersive audiovisual installations, two of which are interactive. Rooted in a sampling aesthetic fundamental to Marclay’s work, these installations respond to the storytelling available on Snapchat and visitors’ sounds and movements in the gallery space. The LACMA exhibition is curated by Rita Gonzalez, the Terri and Michael Smooke Curator and Department Head of Contemporary Art.

“As an institution that supports artistic innovation and experimentation, we are excited to present the U.S. premiere of Christian Marclay’s new work,” said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director. “In previous works Marclay has already recomposed the material of our media world into his own art; in this case he has absorbed the material of digital media into a work that engages visitors interactively with sound and suggests new possibilities for art intersecting with technology.”

“Christian has built a totally new way to explore the creativity of our community through sound—with unique and surprising results. We can’t wait for LACMA visitors

to experience his tremendous work,” said Evan Spiegel, co-founder and Chief Executive Officer at Snap, Inc.

Over the past four decades, Christian Marclay has explored the fusion of art and audio cultures. Though he studied art and is not a trained musician or composer, Marclay considers sound and musicality integral to his practice. In the 1970s he began using record turntables as musical instruments, creating compositions with loops, skips, and scratches. Since then, he has created musical recordings, prints, sculpture, performances, and video works that incorporate strategies of montage, improvisation, and appropriation. In 2010, Marclay premiered *The Clock*, a 24-hour single-channel montage constructed out of moments in cinema and television history that depict the passage of time. Acquired by LACMA in 2011, *The Clock* has become a signature work in the museum’s collection.

Exhibition curator Rita Gonzalez shares that “Marclay, in partnership with Snapchat engineers, has created dynamic new works that responds to the current digital age. Marclay is recognized for exploring audio and visual cultures in his work; LACMA’s *The Clock* is the perfect example. In *Sound Stories*, Marclay expands his practice by engaging with Snapchat videos as his raw material, resulting in an audiovisual and experiential performance.”

“Sound is too often ignored and purely incidental on most uploaded videos, image dominates, so I wanted to shift the focus on the sound. Sampling from millions of Snapchats was like having the largest ever collection of LPs to work with. Like a deejay, I started remixing these sounds,” said Christian Marclay.

Sound Stories was on display the Centre d'art La Malmaison in June 2018, as part of the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity 2018. The team of engineers who collaborated with the artist includes Aashish Gadani, Adrian Kant, Andrew Lin, Jarek Lupinski, Eli Semory, Eran Weissenstern, and Allison Wruble.

In 2018, Snap joined LACMA’s Art + Technology Lab Advisory Board, a group composed of the leading innovators across a variety of technological industries. Advisory board members lend their experience and expertise and help drive the conversation around how museums will use new technology in the future and serve as advisors to artists who receive grants from the lab.

About the Exhibition

Sound Stories comprises five audiovisual installations, two of which invite engagement by the visitor.

All Together, 2018

For *All Together*, Marclay sequenced more than 400 Snaps to create a composition that plays across 10 smartphones. The small screens and their internal speakers produce an intimate orchestra of synchronized sounds and images culled from everyday moments publicly shared on Snapchat. The composition loops seamlessly, recalling Marclay's four-screen video installation *Video Quartet* (2002), which consists of clips from Hollywood films in which actors engage in acts of sound making; collectively, the excerpts produce a cacophonous yet highly exuberant composition.

Tinsel Loop, 2018

The two screens in *Tinsel Loop* play *Tinsel*, a 2005 composition by Marclay, by using an algorithm that searched the sounds of millions of Snaps to match each note of the melody. The composition is performed not by traditional instruments, but by fragments of Snapchat videos that match the pitch of each note. As the tune repeats itself, a new series of Snapchat fragments are used, each completely different from the last.

The Organ, 2018

The Organ is an interactive work in which visitors are invited to play a keyboard in the center of the room. Working with engineers, Marclay developed an algorithm that finds sounds that correspond to musical notes. Each organ key that is pressed triggers a set of Snaps that closely match the note played, with a wide array of people and situations projected on a large screen. Marclay finds appeal in the impurity of sounds generated by the algorithm, echoing his interest in the decayed audio of old recording formats like vinyl and cassette tape.

Talk to Me/Sing to Me, 2018

In *Talk to Me/Sing to Me*, visitors are invited to speak or sing into smartphones suspended from the ceiling like elements on a mobile. Through an algorithm developed by Snap engineers using speech-detection and signal-processing technology, the phones analyze voices in the room and respond by mimicking them.

Sound Tracks, 2018

With *Sound Tracks* visitors encounter a soundscape composed of eerie, unfamiliar noises generated by tablets whose sound is amplified by hidden overhead speakers. Marclay was interested in challenging the typically buoyant and fanciful qualities of Snaps by exploring a feature native to the Snapchat app, "Turtle Mode." Sampling and slowing down individual Snaps, Marclay transforms videos of banal everyday activities into moody, overlapping cinematic soundtracks.

About the Artist

Christian Marclay was born in California and grew up in Switzerland. For nearly 40 years, he has approached music from the standpoint of a visual artist. An early pioneer of turntablism (the use of records and turntables as musical instruments), Marclay is interested in expanding the definition of music composition by exploring the relationship between sound and image, which he does through collage, photography, sculpture, and video. Influenced by the chance-determined operations of avant-garde artist and composer John Cage, Marclay often creates a framework through which any external event or act becomes part of or contributes to the work of art. Over the years Marclay has developed several "graphic scores," works that are meant to be interpreted by musicians in an improvisational style. One of the best-known examples of this body of work is *Graffiti Composition* (1996–2002), a portfolio of images documenting the public's response to blank sheet music pasted on walls in Berlin. Musicians were later invited to perform their interpretations of the marks made by the public.

Marclay's work has been exhibited widely. He has had solo exhibitions at Kunsthaus Zürich and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (both 1997); ArtPace, San Antonio, Texas (1999); The Hammer Museum, and Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York (both 2003); and Seattle Art Museum and Barbican Art Gallery, London (both 2004). In 2010, the Whitney mounted a survey of his graphic scores, *Christian Marclay: Festival*, in 2010.

Marclay's groundbreaking film-montage installation, *The Clock* (2010) has been hailed as a masterwork of contemporary art. It was included in the 2011 Venice Biennale, where Marclay received the Golden Lion award for best artist. That same year, LACMA acquired *The Clock* for its permanent collection, a gift of LACMA trustee Steve Tisch through the 2011 Collectors Committee. Since then, *The Clock* has exhibited at major museums around the world, most recently the Tate in London and Tel Aviv Museum of Modern Art. Marclay is also featured in this year's iteration of

the 58th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale, *May You Live in Interesting Times*. A solo exhibition titled *Christian Marclay: Compositions* is currently on display at the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, (MACBA).

Credit

Christian Marclay: Sound Stories

In collaboration with Snap Inc.

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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Image credit: Christian Marclay, *The Organ*, 2018, installation photograph, *Christian Marclay x Snap: Sound Stories* at Le Centre d'art La Malmaison, Cannes, © 2019, photo © Benoit Florençon

About LACMA

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of nearly 142,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

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About Snap Inc.

Snap Inc. is a camera company. We believe that reinventing the camera represents our greatest opportunity to improve the way people live and communicate. We contribute to human progress by empowering people to express themselves, live in the moment, learn about the world, and have fun together.