

Exhibition: *NOT I: Throwing Voices (1500 BCE–2020 CE)*

On View: April 1–July 25, 2021

Location: Resnick Pavilion



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The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *NOT I: Throwing Voices (1500 BCE–2020 CE)*, an exhibition using ventriloquism, literally and liberally, to explore the representations sounds and voices and their disquieting capacity of refraction, synchronicity and misdirection. Ventriloquism relies on the confusion between sight and hearing, performer and puppet, silence and speech; and confronts issues of identity, embodiment, agency, performance and objecthood. Even the most conventional ventriloquist sketch is defined by the continuous recasting of questions on the imbricated relationship between voice, speech, identity and authority: Where is the voice coming from? How is that voice split into many bodies? Whose voice is this? Who is speaking on behalf of whom?

Drawn primarily from LACMA's encyclopedic collection, *NOT I* considers ventriloquism as both a theme and a methodology integral to the logic of institutions devoted to the dissemination of knowledge, such as museums and libraries. The exhibition features over two hundred objects spanning more than 3,500 years to offer various degrees of ventriloquized voices ranging from the literal to the liberal. Arranged in ten non-sequential sections, the show allows for cross-collection representations of sound, silence, voice and text, and the entanglement and misalignment between voices and bodies. The exhibition includes a special project by Meriç Algün in collaboration with the Los Angeles Public Library, not only to honor Alexandre Vattemare (1796–1864), a ventriloquist instrumental in the creation of inter-library loans, but also to point at the interrelation of museums, libraries, and disembodied voices.

NOT I is organized by José Luis Blondet, curator of special initiatives at LACMA

“The exhibition delves into LACMA’s collection at large, highlighting frictions and relations among works rather than on the singularity of a masterwork,” says Blondet. “For example, pairing Ryūryūkyō Shinsai’s *Woman Making Rabbit Shadow for Small*

Boy (1807) with Edward Ruscha's *Rabbit* (1986), one can argue that it only took 189 years and a good dose of chance and luck for the gesture of this woman to produce the shadow of a rabbit, manifested on the surface of the Ruscha print."

On the occasion of the exhibition, LACMA commissioned new projects from artists Raven Chacon, Patricia Fernández, and Puppies Puppies. Raven Chacon's sound installation can be heard throughout the exhibition. It consists of a grouping of seven songs composed from sounds and pitches sourced from whistles and ocarinas from the museum's Art of Ancient Americas collection, on display in the exhibition. The songs, presented as beams of directionalised sound, introduce visitors to the exhibition space, telling the stories of other non-sounding objects in the exhibition, inviting the listener to align their own voice with the cumulative activity in the gallery.

Los Angeles-based Patricia Fernández designed and hand-carved four sculptures in walnut and pinewood that double as frames for six Francisco de Goya prints included in the show. Adding yet another layer to the process of framing another artist's voice, Fernández collaborated with carpenter José Luis Carcedo, her grandfather, in the realization of two of the four sculptures.

Puppies Puppies (Jade Olivo Kuriki) produced three works that continue their investigation on trauma, the politics of gender, and body surrogates. For instance, in their video *Realistic Androids for Hospitals in Japan (Audio: Kanzi the Ape Speaking Through a Lexigram Keyboard)*, Puppies Puppies discusses technological voices and gender through found footage and the juxtaposition of a soundtrack. Also part of their commission, the performance *Trans, Transfeminine, Femme, Trans Womxn, Trans Women, Gender Non-Conforming, Non-Binary, Genderqueer, and Two-Spirit people (Dedicated to Camila María Concepción - Rest In Peace)* was filmed in the galleries in early November and is available virtually via the museum's Vimeo.

Exhibition Organization

Not I examines underlying issues of voice, silence, and speaking through ten non-sequential sections. These groupings are not closed categories, but rather clusters that highlight an aspect of the ventriloquized voice. They are: Not I (Dolls, dummies, surrogates, Pygmalion, and plugs); Not Double (Rewritings and recasting voices); Not Silence (Bubbles, whistles, and love letters); Not Nowhere (Voices from a lovely nowhere); Not Heard, Not Seen (Hearing aids); Not Treachery (Pipes. Literally); Not Duck, Not Hare (Out of sync); Not Johns (One and many works); Not Borrowed (Libraries, ventriloquists, and alphabets); and Not I, Again (Coda). The final section features a single work: a video of the play *Not I* (1973) written in 1973 by Samuel Beckett from which we borrowed the title of the exhibition.

Publication

Six Scripts for NOT I

\$25

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication titled *Six Scripts for NOT I*, featuring five commissioned texts written in the form of scripts for probable ventriloquist performances, and the exhibition checklist. Guest authors include Darby English, Amy Gerstler, Sarah Kessler, Christina Catherine Martinez, and Alan Page Arriaga.

Related Programming

Readings of ventriloquist scripts

Initially intended to be read in-gallery as public programs, the five commissioned scripts of the exhibition's accompanying publication *Six Scripts for NOT I* will be performed and pre-recorded in the galleries, and shared as a virtual series. A new reading becomes available the first Thursday of each month between March and July 2021. Visit lacma.org for more information.

Performance: *Trans, Transfeminine, Femme, Trans Womxn, Trans Women, Gender Non-Conforming, Non-Binary, Genderqueer, and Two-Spirit people (Dedicated to Camila María Concepción - Rest In Peace)*

The title of this performance by Puppies Puppies (Jade Kuriki Olivo) correlates to the six prominent nude trans, gender non-conforming, two-spirit, genderqueer, non-binary, artists, activists, dancers, musicians, organizers, and creatives that stood in the galleries of the exhibition. Initially planned as a live performance, *Trans, Transfeminine, Femme, Trans Womxn, Trans Women, Gender Non-Conforming, Non-Binary, Genderqueer, and Two-Spirit people (Dedicated to Camila María Concepción - Rest In Peace)* was filmed in the galleries in early November and is available for viewing via the museum's Vimeo through January 20, 2021, Inauguration Day.

Credit

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

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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.

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

Image captions: (Left) Ryūryūkyō Shinsai, *Woman Making Rabbit Shadow for Small Boy*, 1807, Surimono; color woodblock print, Gift in memory of Mary Thayer Gruys, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA; (Center) Edward Ruscha, *Rabbit*, 1986, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Gift of The Jane & Marc Nathanson Family Foundation, © Edward J. Ruscha IV, photo © Museum Associates/LACMA; (Right) Patricia Fernández (with José Luis Carcedo, her grandfather), *Untitled (Frames for Goya)*, 2005/2020, courtesy of the artist, commissioned by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, © Patricia Fernández, photo © Ian James

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