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**THE NEW MUSEUM AND BORUSAN CONTEMPORARY
TO CO-PRESENT
“MIKA TAJIMA: ÆTHER,” OPENING MARCH 3
AT BORUSAN CONTEMPORARY IN ISTANBUL, TURKEY**



Mika Tajima, *Human Synth (Tokyo)*, 2017. Custom predictive sentiment analysis program, gaming engine, Alienware VR PC, Twitter API, screens, leather, stainless steel dungeon rings, and projector; Video, color; endless duration. Courtesy the artist; Van Doren Waxter, New York; and Taro Nasu, Tokyo

New York, NY...The New Museum and Borusan Contemporary announce a co-presentation of the exhibition “**Mika Tajima: Æther**,” opening March 3, 2018, at Borusan Contemporary in Istanbul, Turkey. The exhibition is curated by Margot Norton, Curator at the New Museum, and marks the first collaboration between the two esteemed institutions.

In her sculptures, paintings, videos, and installations, Japanese-American artist Mika Tajima (b. 1975, Los Angeles; lives and works in New York) explores the techniques and technologies developed to shape and control the human body—its physicality, productivity, and imperceptible desires. From architectural systems to ergonomic design to psychographic data, her works operate in the space between the transient and the tangible, and highlight the complex networks of power and submission that we experience in relationship to our physical bodies and virtual selves.

“Mika Tajima: Æther” brings together four distinct bodies of work that speak to the ways our lives are influenced by the invisible forces that surround us, saturate our environment, and ultimately regulate our bodies and behavior. These include *Negative Entropy* (2012–ongoing), a series of

woven textile works that translate acoustic data into abstract compositions; *Meridian (Istanbul)* (2018), a light installation that responds in real time to the collective mood of a population expressed on live Twitter feeds; *Force Touch (Manu Dextra Sinistra, Horizontal)* (2018), a wall sculpture with embedded Jacuzzi nozzles emitting pressurized air; and *Human Synth (Istanbul)* (2018), a video installation that uses a predictive computer algorithm to interpret future human sentiments as evolving plumes of smoke.

The title of the exhibition describes an intangible substance that, according to ancient and medieval science, was thought to fill the area of the universe above the terrestrial sphere, transmitting light and electromagnetic waves. While seemingly invisible, technology and data, like aether, envelop and penetrate all matter. Using digital information—a medium that is ethereal, yet quantifiable—as a material in her work, Tajima interrogates the infrastructures of power that shape our perceptions, choices, and emotions.

WORKS ON VIEW

The works in Tajima's ***Negative Entropy series*** (2012–ongoing) are textile paintings that interpret acoustic data into abstract compositions. These woven portraits of different sites of production are made on a Jacquard loom, a machine created in 1804 that industrialized the process of manufacturing textiles with the use of punch cards to transmit data, and an invention that many historians consider an important step in the development of computer and machine programming.

Each work in this series is an individual field recording of diverse acoustic information transmuted into digital spectrogram images using linguistic audio software. Recordings cover a wide range, including the voice of acclaimed Japanese translator and intermediary between the Japanese and Western avant garde [*Negative Entropy (Kazue Kobata, Blue, Double)* [2015]], the sound made by a technician producing Jacquard punch cards (*Negative Entropy (Kim Reddick Jacquard Card Cutter, Pink, Double)* [2015]), and ambient sound from the server floor of Digital Ocean, one of the largest cloud computing infrastructure providers in the world [*Negative Entropy (Digital Ocean, NYC2 Super Micro, Blue, Quad)* (2018)]. The deeply saturated colors of threads that comprise the patterns for each of these works are taken from trends in activewear, reflecting aesthetic decisions purposefully designed to shape the body's experience and performance.

The title of this series is taken from a term used in quantum physics referring to the reverse of entropy, by which chaotic information is measured and systematized. *Negative Entropy*, like many of Tajima's recent projects, speaks to the difficulty in calibrating the qualities of life itself, especially when measuring abstract properties such as language and emotion.

A hanging light installation comprised of networked LED lights, ***Meridian (Istanbul)*** (2018) responds in real time to aggregate and quantified human sentiment scraped from social media. The shifting color of the lights responds in real time to the collective mood of the city of Istanbul, which is evaluated by a computer linguistics program that analyzes live textual data taken from Twitter feeds and then processed through an algorithm developed to translate data into light color. The work not only attempts to translate and distill this emotional data, but affects the mood of the viewers in the room as well—shifting the light and color of the space and transforming the experience of the objects within it. *Meridian (Istanbul)* translates the city's fleeting emotions into similarly ethereal gradient hues of light, recognizing technology's persistent attempts to measure the elusive and unquantifiable qualities of life.

Social Chair (2016) continues Tajima's ongoing investigation with the ways built environments can manipulate and control human activity. This piece is based on a modular design by Yves Béhar for Herman Miller titled "Public Office," which aims to transform corporate environments into places for collaboration. The piece references how working environments are made casual by design, meshed with everything from waiting rooms and lounges to transit stations and cafes. The shape of the chair is at odds with its intentions, as it in fact separates its sitters, facing them away from one another such that they would need to contort themselves in order to converse. Carved from traditional walnut and perforated with Jacuzzi nozzles alluding to invisible pressures felt by its users, *Social Chair* highlights the architectural infrastructures that organize social space and eclipse individual agency.

Pranayama E (2017) is part of a series of wooden sculptures modeled after orthotic devices and punctured with chromed hot tub jets. The masklike form of this piece recalls a thoracic brace or restraining device, which would be custom-molded to modify the shape and function of the body. Presented as an artifact, Tajima's solid wooden structure becomes a prosthetic or stand-in for the human form. "Pranayama" is a Sanskrit word that refers to the yogic practice of controlling the breath. The term is composed of two separate words: "prana" meaning breath as well as life force, and "ayama" meaning restrain or control. The works in this series bring the reformation or constraint of the body in line with the spiritual practice of opening channels of energy through internal regulation.

Installed on a large wall, ***Force Touch (Manu Dextra Sinistra, Horizontal)*** (2018) presents a configuration of gold-chromed Jacuzzi jets that emit forced air and bring viewers in contact with an unseen pressure. In this work, the jets are arranged according to a diagram, typically used in acupuncture, of meridian points in the human body that carry energy and influence organs and entire physiological systems. The title of this work refers to haptic technology developed to reproduce the sensation of human touch—a metaphor for the unseen technological pressures and systems of control that shape our everyday behavior.

Human Synth (Istanbul) (2018), a video installation, presents animated plumes of smoke that meander unpredictably within the suspended screens, shifting shape, blooming, and dissipating, unable to be contained or captured. Tajima created this evolving animation using predictive computer algorithms such as those used by the military and in e-commerce to gauge the direction of future human emotion. Based on real-time Twitter feeds in the city of Istanbul, these algorithmic predictions employ natural language processing and sentiment analysis to predict trends in collective feeling, which are then made visible in the shape, direction, speed, and hue of the smoke. The work invokes the shamanistic practice of smoke reading, which dates back to ancient Mesopotamia, in a new era of algorithmic prediction. With this work, Tajima speculates on the paradox of how something as subliminal as emotion can be quantified, and questions how we might contend with the mercurial qualities of life if they are in fact predetermined.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Artist Mika Tajima was born in Los Angeles, CA, in 1975 and lives and works in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include “Touchless,” Taro Nasu Gallery, Tokyo (2017); “Air,” Raster Gallery, Warsaw (2017); “After Life,” Wadsworth Athenaeum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT (2017); “Meridian (Gold),” SculptureCenter, New York (2016); “Emotion Commune,” Protocinema, Istanbul (2016); and “EMBODY,” 11R Gallery, New York (2016). Tajima has also been featured in group exhibitions “COLORI,” Castello di Rivoli and GAM, Turin (2017); “All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace,” Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2017); “Roppongi Crossing,” Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2016); and “The Eighth Climate (What does art do?),” the 11th Gwangju Biennale, Korea (2016). She was the recipient of the New York Artadia Award in 2017.

ABOUT BORUSAN CONTEMPORARY

Borusan Contemporary is a multi-platform program of exhibitions, events, educational activities, new commissions, and site-specific installations rooted in the Borusan Contemporary Art Collection. These activities are defined by their specific focus on media arts broadly defined, i.e. artists who work with time, light, technology, video, software, and beyond. Most of the program takes place at Perili Köşk Istanbul, and coexists with the offices of Borusan Holding, in essence creating a unique museum in an office paradigm. The entire building, including the galleries, office space, café, Borusan ArtStore, and outdoor terraces with breathtaking views of the Bosphorus, are open to the public on the weekends.

ABOUT NEW MUSEUM

The New Museum is the only museum in New York City exclusively devoted to contemporary art. Founded in 1977, the New Museum is a center for exhibitions, information, and documentation about living artists from around the world. From its beginnings as a one-room office on Hudson Street to the inauguration of its first freestanding building on the Bowery designed by SANAA in 2007, the New Museum continues to be a place of experimentation and a hub of new art and new ideas.

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