



HYPHEN-HUB

Particles and Digital Serfs

A Two-Person Exhibition featuring Itziar Barrio and Janet Biggs

Curated by Jane Ursula Harris

Location: Onassis ONX, 645 5th Ave, Lower Level, New York, NY 10022

Opening Reception: March 21, 6-8PM

Public Hours: March 22-24, 12-6PM

Public Performance: March 23, 6-8PM, Performance at 6:30PM sharp, followed by a reception

[NEW INC](#) and [Onassis ONX](#) are pleased to present “Particles and Digital Serfs”: A Two-Person Exhibition featuring Itziar Barrio and Janet Biggs, curated by Jane Ursula Harris. The exhibition opens on Thursday, March 21st with a reception from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. A new collaborative performance between Barrio and Biggs will also be presented on Saturday, March 23rd from 6-8pm, performance starting at 6:30pm, followed by a reception. The performance is made possible with additional support from Hyphen Hub. The exhibition ends on Sunday, March 24th.

“Particles and Digital Serfs” features a series of multichannel, transmedia works by Itziar Barrio and Janet Biggs that explore the compelling intersections of science, art, labor, and robotics. Known for immersive video installations that merge documentary and cinematic styles to limn the possibilities of non-linear narrative, Barrio and Biggs tell stories that are human, non-human and machine-driven. Collaborative and research-based in nature, their work ranges in perspective from the geological to the neurological, with speculative and mnemonic visions of time and matter evoking the ever-shifting role of technology as collaborator, servant, and master.

In *ROBOTA MML* (Barrio, 2019-24) and *Seeing Constellations in the Brightness Between Stars* (Biggs, 2018), both on view, the artists explore issues of bodily control and identity, reminding us that notions of the cyborgian and humanoid in an AI world remain inextricably tied to capitalist ideas of power and exploitation. *ROBOTA MML*, the second film in Barrio’s *Material* trilogy, does so by invoking Karel Capek’s dystopic sci-fi play *R.U.R.* (1920), a cautionary tale about greed that also promotes class consciousness. Connecting the playwright’s use of the Czech word *robota* - a synonym for forced labor - to Foucault’s ideas of biopower and contemporary gender politics, Barrio conjures the play’s expressionistic ethos, incorporating

smoke as a personified agent capable of effecting the human psyche, alongside references to Géricault's painting about governmental corruption and the sublime, *Raft of the Medusa* (1818–1819). But in place of the play's factory setting, she centers a queer night club turning it into an allegory for subversive embodied pleasures. Barrio will debut a three-channel version of *ROBOTA MML* for this exhibition, which will also include several associated robotic sculptures.



ROBOTA MML, courtesy artist Itziar Barrio

Seeing Constellations, which combines footage from the Mars Society's University Rover Challenge with that of drummer Jason Barnes at Georgia Tech's Center for Music Technology, also considers the limits and potential of robotics. As we watch potential Mars rovers compete to carry out various tasks on a barren, artificial landscape, their progress set to a soundtrack by Barnes, we witness the latter's drumming - conducted with a prosthetic arm fitted with two drumsticks, one he controls, the other guided by AI - crescendo and abruptly stop as one of the rovers tumbles down a hill. Like *A Step on the Sun*, 2012, shot at a miner's camp at the edge of Indonesia's crater, Kawah Ijen Volcano, and *Eclipse*, 2022, set along the remote Chilean coast of Antarctica, the work foregrounds the power of landscape. By foregrounding the demanding, physical nature of labor in environments deemed inhospitable to humans, it alludes to the

ongoing perils of colonization, whether of outer space or bodies here on earth, and yet holds space for hope through cooperation.

The core works featured in "Particles and Digital Serfs" were incubated at NEW INC, and reflect its core principles. In honor of this connection, and their first collaboration, Barrio and Biggs will premiere a site-specific performance on Saturday, March 23rd, featuring Jason Barnes, an amputee drummer who performs with a prosthetic arm powered by machine learning. This performance was made possible with additional support from Hyphen Hub.



Seeing Constellations, courtesy artist Janet Biggs

Biographies:

Itziar Barrio is an interdisciplinary artist producing long-term research based projects involving different agents and collaborators. By rewriting the dominant narratives through which our societies, identities, and realities are constructed, her work opens up new and emancipatory futures. Her survey exhibition was curated by Johanna Burton, and her recent monograph catalog has been published by SKIRA. Her work has been presented internationally at the 14th Shanghai Biennale, MACRO, PARTICIPANT INC, MACBA, Belgrade's Contemporary Art Museum, Museo del Banco de la República, and at the Havana Biennial. She has received awards from NYSCA, Brooklyn Arts Council, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, and Spanish Academy in Rome among others. Barrio's work has been written about in ARTFORUM, Art in America, The

New York Times, The Brooklyn Rail, ART PAPERS and BOMB among many others. She teaches at the School of Visual Arts (NYC) and Sarah Lawrence College (NY).

Janet Biggs is a research-based interdisciplinary artist known for her immersive work in video, film and performance whose work focuses on individuals in extreme landscapes and situations, navigating the territory between art, science and technology. Her body of work has garnered support from organizations such as the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, and has been exhibited at museums and institutions worldwide including the Sarasota Art Museum, Spencer Museum of Art, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Neuberger Museum of Art; SCAD Museum of Art; and the Blaffer Art Museum; among others. Reviews of her work have appeared in the *New York Times*, *New Yorker*, *ArtForum*, *ARTNews*, and *Art in America*.

Jane Ursula Harris is a Brooklyn-based writer, art historian, and curator. Her essays have appeared in recent monographs on Jacolby Satterwhite, Werner Buttner, and M. Lamar. In addition to exhibition catalogs, she has written for *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Art Journal*, *The Believer*, *BOMB*, *Bookforum*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *Cultural Politics*, *Cultured Magazine*, *Flash Art*, *frieze*, *GARAGE*, *Paris Review*, *PAJ*, *TDR*, *Time Out New York*, and the *Village Voice*. She is a 2023 recipient of The Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant. Harris currently teaches at the School of Visual Arts, and curates *Heretics*, an ongoing performance series at Pioneer Works.

ABOUT NEW INC: As the first museum-led cultural incubator, NEW INC was conceived of as a not-for-profit platform for furthering the New Museum's ongoing commitment to new art and new ideas. Now in Year 10, NEW INC's membership model continues to support a diverse range of creative practitioners with a values-driven program and safe space for gathering and developing new creative projects and businesses. In 2020, NEW INC launched ONX Studio, an XR accelerator for artists, in partnership with the Onassis Foundation. NEW INC was cofounded by the New Museum's Toby Devan Lewis Director Lisa Phillips and former Deputy Director Karen Wong in 2014.

ABOUT ONASSIS ONX: Onassis ONX (ONassis eXtended realities) is an initiative by Onassis Culture that envisions bringing transformative, immersive, and interactive experiences to life and on stage through a global new media art program. Its mission is to explore the vast realms of the post-digital era, offering support to creators aiming to craft globally relevant immersive experiences of unparalleled artistic and production quality and bring them to the broadest possible audience in a financially sustainable way.

ABOUT HYPHEN HUB: Hyphen Hub is a New York-based non-profit interdisciplinary new media art organization that explores, promotes, and presents new visions of the future through the integration of art and emerging technologies. Hyphen Hub produces innovative live

performances, organizes art salons, and curates art exhibitions with established and emerging new media artists who work on the vanguard of creative technologies — from augmented and virtual reality to artificial intelligence, FashionTech, bionics, robotics, and cyborgism.