

## The Kitchen presents **Tromarama: Upon a Machine (April 23–June 13)**

### The Sonic-Installation Marks Tromarama's Solo Institutional Debut in the United States

The Kitchen presents *Tromarama: Upon a Machine (April 23–June 13)*. *Upon a Machine* is a newly commissioned project for The Kitchen at Westbeth and marks the Indonesia-based art collective's debut exhibition in the United States. Tromarama—comprising **Febie Babyrose**, **Ruddy Hatumena**, and **Herbert Hans**—has developed an installation that employs an AI model to remix and reinterpret *The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck* (1992–94) by Don Rosa, a text steeped in capitalist themes that shaped the collective's upbringing and is here reexamined through a postcolonial lens.

*Upon a Machine* continues Tromarama's ongoing exploration of the role of technology in civic life. The exhibition constructs a hyperreal environment in which the boundaries between virtual and physical realities are heightened. Sculptural elements place the AI system in dialogue with household items that activate musical instruments throughout the space, creating an unpredictable, responsive soundscape. Sound plays a central role: passages from *The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck* are paired with a composition that reinterprets Disney's 1940 anthem "When You Wish Upon a Star," presented through karaoke-style projection to produce a dreamlike, dissonant score. Both the text and sound anchor the exhibition's investigation into the cultural moment of the early 90s in Indonesia, an important reference point for the collective. Influenced by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart's Marxist critique of *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic* (1971), Tromarama reorients the narratives of *Scrooge McDuck* toward a postcolonial critique of capital, examining how cultural production circulates within global systems of power.

Activating the exhibition is a series of live performances featuring singers, musicians, and dancers working across gospel, opera, jazz, and tap, who improvise in response to prompts generated by the AI model. These performances extend the installation's inquiry into collective interpretation, authorship, and machine-led composition and Tromarama's continued investment in the blurred reality of labor and leisure within a global techno-saturated culture landscape. By inviting artists across performative disciplines to participate in this way, Tromarama underscores the importance of human expression inside technological frameworks. Community programs and public dialogues will further examine the intersections of sound, image, and critique within contemporary transnational contexts.

The exhibition's opening reception will take place on April 23 from 6–8pm with a performance following the reception 8–9pm. On April 25 at 3pm, the artists will be in conversation with curator and writer **Barbara London** co-presented by **Montez Press Radio**. Additional performances will take place on May 15 and June 12 at 8pm with performers to be announced. This July, Tromarama will also present *Turn on #2* as part of Times Square Arts'

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Midnight Moment program, the world's largest, nightly digital public art presentation, on view across 100+ electronic billboards in Times Square.

The Kitchen will welcome families into the gallery space for family workshops across May and June (dates: 5/9, 5/16, 5/30, 6/6) to engage with the exhibition and create found object sculptures inspired by the work. We will source recycled materials for families to use to build their sculptures together with the guidance of a teaching artist. This will take place on designated family hours, from 11am to 1pm. Workshops will be drop-in, so families can come and go as they please. The Kitchen is pleased to partner with Artists & Mothers on the May 30 workshop.

Tromarama has been working collaboratively since 2006, when its members first met in art school and their collaboration began with directing music videos. Their multidisciplinary practice spans video, installation, performance, and digital media, often addressing the entanglements of technology, culture, and everyday life.

*Upon a Machine* is organized by **Robyn Farrell**, Senior Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs with support from **Fernanda Escalera Zambrano**, Operations Manager and Curatorial Intern, **Emma Huerta**. Production by **David Riley**, Production & Exhibitions Manager, and **Tassja Walker**, Production Supervisor.

## BIO

**Tromarama** is an artist collective based in Indonesia, founded by Febie Babyrose, Herbert Hans, and Ruddy Hatumena in 2006. Their work plays with the connections between technology, society, and daily routines. Using video, installations, and interventions with everyday objects, their projects often explore the thin line between labor and leisure within online platforms. They are interested in how digital platforms reshape social behaviors and economic practices, exposing the tensions and contradictions inherent in this evolving landscape. They live and work between Bandung and Jakarta.

## Funding Credits

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The Kitchen acknowledges the generous support provided by the Collaborative Arts Network New York (CANNY). As a coalition of small to mid-sized multidisciplinary arts organizations, CANNY is committed to strengthening the infrastructure of arts nonprofits throughout New York.

The Kitchen would also like to thank the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in New York for their in-kind support of this exhibition.

## About The Kitchen

Founded in 1971 as an artist-driven collective, The Kitchen today reaffirms and expands upon its originating vision as a dynamic cultural institution that centers artists, prioritizes people, and puts process first. Programming in a kunsthalle model that brings together live performances, exhibition making, and public programming under one roof, The Kitchen empowers its audiences and communities to think creatively and radically about what it means to shape a multivalent and sustainable future in art. The Kitchen seeks to cultivate and hold space for wild thought, risky play, and innovative and experimental making, encouraging artists and cultural workers alike to defy boundaries and sending them into the world to remake art history and catalyze creative change.

Among the artists who have presented significant work at The Kitchen are Muhal Richard Abrams, Laurie Anderson, ANOHNI, Robert Ashley, Charles Atlas, Kevin Beasley, Beastie Boys, Gretchen Bender, Dara Birnbaum, Anthony Braxton, John Cage, Lucinda Childs, Julius Eastman, Philip Glass, Leslie Hewitt, Darius Jones, Joan Jonas, Bill T. Jones, Devin Kenny, Barbara Kruger, Simone Leigh, Ralph Lemon, George Lewis, Robert Longo, Robert Mapplethorpe, Sarah Michelson, Tere O'Connor, Okwui Okpokwasili, Nam June Paik, Charlemagne Palestine, Sondra Perry, Vernon Reid, Arthur Russell, Cindy Sherman, Laurie Spiegel, Talking Heads, Greg Tate, Cecil Taylor, Urban Bush Women, Danh Vō, Lawrence Weiner, Anicka Yi, and many more.

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