

THE KITCHEN
NEW YORK CITY'S CENTER
FOR EXPERIMENTAL ART
AND THE AVANT-GARDE
SINCE 1971

For Immediate Release
September 18, 2024

The Kitchen Presents *Code Switch: Distributing Blackness, Reprogramming Internet Art*

Part One of The Kitchen's First Traveling Exhibition Takes Place October 15–December 19, 2024 at The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture; Second Part Will Be on View at Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, April 25–September 7, 2025

The Kitchen presents *Code Switch: Distributing Blackness, Reprogramming Internet Art*, a multi-sited exhibition exploring and redefining the history of “Black data.” The first of its kind internationally, *Code Switch* centers and celebrates contributions by artists of African descent to the rapidly advancing field of new media art and digital practice. Drawing its title from **André L. Brock's** groundbreaking text *Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures* (2020), the exhibition explores the relationship between Black cultural production and the legacy of computation as a mode of machinic engagement and creative inspiration.

In a moment where technology mediates and has transformed all parts of a visual culture, *Code Switch* provokes reconsiderations about what “Internet art” is altogether. Given its engagement of time-based media, this exhibition draws lines to an art-historic root within the experimental Fluxus movement and is comprised of two parts. The first is an archival presentation bringing The Kitchen into collaboration with **The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture** (515 Malcolm X Blvd, New York, NY 10037), October 15–December 19, recognizing contributions of Black artists, thinkers, and cultural figures to catalyzing discourses that were precursors, pre-1990, to ideas and methods central to what would, in the rise of cyber cultures, be deemed new media and Internet art. The second is a contemporary group show, presented in partnership with the **Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit** (MOCAD) (4454 Woodward Ave, Detroit, MI 48201), April 25–September 7, 2025, featuring works made between 1990 and the present day.

Code Switch: Distributing Blackness, Reprogramming Internet Art is organized by **Legacy Russell** (Executive Director & Chief Curator) and **Angelique Rosales Salgado** (Curatorial Assistant)—with contributed research by **Tsige Tafesse** (2023-2024 Curatorial Fellow) and **Kyla Gordon** (2024-2025 Curatorial Fellow)—of The Kitchen; and by **Jova Lynne** (Co-Director and Artistic Director) and **Isabella Nimmo** (Associate Curator) of MOCAD. Exhibition design is by **Pacific**.

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The Kitchen's first-ever traveling exhibition continues its "Without Walls" era, exploring site and cross-institutional collaboration and the potentials of institutional porousness as its Chelsea building is under renovation and the organization operates from its satellite space at Westbeth Artists Housing. For *Code Switch*, the organization sought partners aligned in mission and values and rooted in fecund sites of Black cultural production—from the Harlem Renaissance to the advent of Detroit techno.

For The Kitchen, this unprecedented collaboration with the Schomburg and partnership with MOCAD represent new opportunities to continue to challenge circumscribed historic understandings of the avant garde and the archival omissions that reproduce them, in a vital exchange between New York and Detroit institutions. As the exhibition reflects the contributions of Black people to various technological and cultural movements and the economies that have been formed by them, it expands the incomplete project of the avant garde. *Code Switch* depicts the agility of a distributed Blackness—in which new countercultures, mobilities, and enclosures are strategically formed and shift in a plurality that cannot be trapped, confined or consolidated—and these ideas' entanglement with the genesis and propagation of new media and Internet art as these canons continue to advance and emerge.

At The Schomburg Center, October 15–December 19

The debut of this project's "broadcast" at The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture marks an unprecedented collaboration between two storied New York institutions. From The Kitchen's founding in 1971, the organization has remained a leading nexus for experimental artists; as part of its institutional history The Kitchen maintains a living archive of over 4,000 artists. Founded in 1925, The Schomburg's mission is to preserve African American, African Diaspora, and African experiences; its research library is internationally renowned. These archives are mutual sites ripe for interventions, discovery, memory-making, and decolonial praxis; this collaboration presents an opportunity for both institutions to further broaden their archives.

The archival exhibition at The Schomburg gathers and considers histories pre-and-post 1960, first carrying us from how data was collected and visualized before the presence of the computer as we know it today, to the invention of the first computing machines that set the stage for digital computers as we now know them. It ranges from **W.E.B. Du Bois's** 20th century hand-drawn charts and graphs representing Black contributions to American culture in colorful illustration; to the labor of Black "computers"—human programmers who played key roles in advancing the fields of programming, coding, and engineering—over time. Computer scientists, mathematicians, and engineers featured include **Evelyn Boyd Granville, Dorothy Vaughan, Creola Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, Annie Easley, Gladys West, and Clarence "Skip" Ellis.**

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On view as well are rarely seen selections from the **Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU)**. The first HARYOU report, titled "Youth in the Ghetto: A study of the consequences of powerlessness and a blueprint for change," made data-driven, consciousness-raising recommendations and was published in 1964 following the Harlem uprisings.

The exhibition also turns toward the uneasy relationship between the origins of the Internet via its inception in 1969 as the government-funded intelligence initiative of ARPANET, and the complex dilemmas arising between advancements of technologies that redefine modernity and visual culture. It draws directly from the troubles of the past, and arcs forward to the challenges of our present day.

These considerations converge with the founding and opening of **The Studio Museum in Harlem** in September 1968, identifying this inaugural solo exhibition *Electronic Refractions II* that featured the work of artist **Tom Lloyd** (1929-1996) as a jumping-off point and departure. Charting the rise of "New Media" and time-based art practices during this time, this section of first part of Fall 2024 exhibition at The Schomburg explores work of visual artists including Lloyd, **David Drake** (otherwise known as "Dave the Potter"), **Benjamin Patterson**, **Howardena Pindell**, **Candis Mosely Pettway**, **Mattie Ross**, **Ulysses Jenkins**, **Milford Graves**, **Faith Ringgold**, **Blondell Cummings**, **Lorraine O'Grady**, **Jack Whitten**, and composer and scholar of experimental music **George Lewis**. It also recognizes the influence of Afrofuturist science fiction writers and thinkers such as **Samuel R. Delany** and **Octavia E. Butler** as well as guerrilla archivist, access television producer, and librarian **Marion Stokes**. These creative practitioners via their artistic innovations establish new sightlines to a Black networked life, an empowered avant-garde algorithm that predates and extends beyond the invention of the Internet.

In Spring (April 25–September 7, 2025), The Kitchen will present the second part of this exhibition, a contemporary group show, in partnership with Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD).

Funding Credits

The Kitchen's programs are made possible in part with support from The Kitchen's Board of Directors, The Kitchen Global Council, Leadership Fund, and Director's Council, as well as through generous support from The Amphion Foundation, Inc., Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Cowles Charitable Trust, The James and Judith K. Dimon Foundation, Jerome Robbins Foundation, Ford Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, The Harkness Foundation for Dance, Marta Heflin Foundation, Lambent Foundation Fund, a fund of Tides Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, New Music USA, The Royal Norwegian Consulate General in New York, Ruth Foundation For The Arts, The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, and Teiger Foundation, Andy Warhol Foundation for the Arts; and in part by public funds from the Manhattan Borough President, the National Endowment for the Arts, New York City Department of

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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 James, Joan Jonas, Bill T. Jones, Devin Kenny, 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 Võ, Lawrence Weiner, Anicka Yi, and many more.

About The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

Founded in 1925 and named a National Historic Landmark in 2017, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture is one of the world's leading cultural institutions devoted to the preservation, research, interpretation, and exhibition of materials focused on African American, African Diasporan, and African experiences. As a research division of The New York Public Library, the Schomburg Center features diverse programming and collections totaling over 11 million items that illuminate the richness of global black history, arts, and culture. Learn more at schomburgcenter.org.

About The New York Public Library

For over 125 years, The New York Public Library has been a free provider of education and information for the people of New York and beyond. With 92 locations—including research and branch libraries—throughout the Bronx, Manhattan, and Staten Island, the Library offers free materials, computer access, classes, exhibitions, programming, and more to everyone from toddlers to scholars, and has seen record numbers of attendance

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and circulation in recent years. The New York Public Library receives approximately 16 million visits through its doors annually and millions more around the globe who use its resources at www.nypl.org. To offer this wide array of free programming, The New York Public Library relies on both public and private funding. Learn more about how to support the Library at nypl.org/support.

About MOCAD

The Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD) is a non-profit institution located in the heart of Detroit, dedicated to presenting art at the forefront of contemporary culture. MOCAD explores cultural and sociopolitical issues through diverse and dynamic exhibitions and programs, connecting Detroit with the global art world. The museum focuses on art as a means to nurture social change and human understanding, reflecting the community it serves. MOCAD encourages innovative experimentation by artists, musicians, makers, cultural producers, and scholars, enriching all who participate and educating visitors of all ages on the power of art. Welcoming creative voices from Detroit and around the world, MOCAD aims to guide us toward an equitable and inclusive future. The Museum believes that art can change us and is committed to holding a space where challenge, acceptance, hope, and beauty can coexist.

Website: thekitchen.org

Instagram: [instagram.com/TheKitchen_NYC](https://www.instagram.com/TheKitchen_NYC)

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Press Contact: Blake Zidell at Blake Zidell & Associates: blake@blakezidell.com or 917.572.2493

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