

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



## Tromarama's *Upon a Machine*

Group Visit Teaching Guide to The Kitchen's exhibition *Tromarama: Upon a Machine* at Westbeth

### What is *Upon a Machine*?

The exhibition is a newly commissioned project by Tromarama, the Indonesian art collective founded in 2006 by Febie Babyrose, Herbert Hans, and Ruddy Hatumena. They are known for their investigations into hyperreality and the boundaries between virtual and physical worlds. This is their first institutional exhibition in the United States. The project extends an ongoing inquiry into the blurred lines between labor and leisure using context conditioning to an AI model, fed with their personal literary and music archives. This more intimate dataset becomes a lens through which the artists examine how personal and social histories are reinterpreted and remixed by generative technologies. Two literary and cultural references anchor the project: *The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck* (1992–94) by Don Rosa, a serialized comic tracing capital accumulation through nostalgia, and *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic* (1971), a pioneering Marxist critique by Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart. By bringing these works into dialogue, Tromarama examines how global pop culture constructs myths of wealth, labor, and aspiration within postcolonial and rapidly digitizing economies.

Learn more about the exhibition [here](#).

### Before your visit

Think about

- Technology and Creativity: Can a machine be creative?
- What kinds of data shape your own identity (music, media, memories)?
- Labor vs. Leisure: When are you “working” and when are you “resting”? Do phones or computers blur that boundary?
- Sonic abstraction and space: How does sound change the way you experience a space?
- Pop culture and Power: How do cartoons, movies, media deliver messages about success or wealth? Who do those stories benefit?
- Can human expression take place in technological frameworks?

### Key Terms

Hyperreality:	A postmodern concept describing a condition where technology and media blur the line between reality and simulation, making representations of reality feel more authentic than reality itself
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AI (Artificial Intelligence)	AI is a set of technologies that empowers computers to learn, reason, and perform a variety of advanced tasks in ways that used to require human intelligence, such as understanding language and analyzing data.
Installation Art	A three-dimensional, mixed-media genre designed to transform the perception of a specific space and create an immersive experience for the viewer.
Post colonial	An academic, cultural, and political analysis of the lingering consequences of colonialism and imperialism. It examines the impact of exploitation on formerly colonized people and their lands, focusing on issues of identity, power, and the legacy of imperial rule in literature, history, and culture.
Labor	labor is defined as intense physical or mental effort, productive work for economic gain and the collective body of workers (employees).
Capitalism	An economic system based on private ownership of the means of production, where businesses operate for profit and prices are set through free-market competition.
Algorithm	An algorithm is a precise, step-by-step set of instructions or rules followed to solve a specific problem, perform calculations, or accomplish a task, acting like a recipe for decision-making.
Automation	The use of technology, software, or robotics to perform tasks with minimal human intervention, aiming to increase efficiency, speed, and accuracy.
Consumer culture	A social and economic order where buying and displaying material goods is central to personal identity, social status, and daily life.
Globalization	The process of increasing interconnectedness and integration among countries, economies, cultures, and populations worldwide. Driven by technological advancements, improved communications, and reduced trade barriers

## During the visit

- Look closely: How many screens can you find? How many instruments are present? What kinds? Where do you think the “brain” of the machine is located? What materials are used in the sculptures?

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- Listen and move: How does sound change as you walk through the space? Try to move closer and further from the instruments, notice how your body reacts to this change. Make observations, what makes you feel safe or uncomfortable?
- Engage your body: How do you react, are you part of it, do you think you are activating it in some way?

## Family Workshop

To accompany this exhibition, The Kitchen is hosting [free workshops for families](#) across 4 Saturdays during the exhibition's run. The Kitchen will welcome families into the gallery space for family workshops across May and June to engage with the exhibition *Upon a Machine* by **Tromarama** 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.

These workshops will take place on designated family hours, from **11am to 1pm** on **May 9th, 16th, 30th & June 6th**. 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.

## After your visit

### Reflections

- How did the combination of sound, sculpture, and screens shape your experience? Did you feel like an observer, a participant, or both?
- How did the AI element change your understanding of authorship? Do you think the work feels more human or machine-like?
- When did you feel most comfortable and most uneasy?
- The exhibition references Scrooge McDuck → What does this character represent to you? How might he relate to capitalism or wealth?
- The sound reinterprets "When You Wish Upon a Star." Did you notice this? Does it feel hopeful, nostalgic, or something else?

### Other themes for discussion:

- AI and authorship.
- Global media and capitalism.
- Sensory perception in installation art.
- How systems shape behavior.

Teaching Guide Created by The Kitchen's Spring 2026 Education Intern, Rey Cordero Elizondo