

# Code Switch: *Distributing Blackness, Reprogramming Internet Art*

Group Visit Guide to The Kitchen's multi-sited exhibition *Code Switch*, in collaboration with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

## What is *Code Switch*?

*Code Switch: Distributing Blackness* is an exhibition presented by [The Kitchen](#) at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. The exhibition explores and redefines the history of “Black data,” centering and celebrating 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), this project explores the relationship between Black cultural production and the legacy of computation as a mode of machinic engagement and creative inspiration.

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

## Pre-Visit

Before you visit, think about:

1. What is internet art?
2. Think about the terms “machine,” “computer,” “data,” “media.” What do those words have in common? Can those words exist without screens?
3. Why is there an exhibition dedicated to Black artists and creators who work with data, computers, and machines?
4. What might code switch, as a term, mean?
5. What do you see when you look at the code switch program graphic? What can that tell us about the exhibition?

## Important Words to Define

1. Avant-garde
2. Experimental art
3. Computer programming
4. Diptych or series
5. Exhibition
6. Curate

## During your visit

Use this worksheet to further engage with exhibition artists and capture the atmosphere of your experience at *Code Switch*. This worksheet is meant to be used while you walk around the exhibition.

You will need:

- [Printed worksheet](#)
- Writing utensil
- Optional: different colored writing utensils

## Post-Visit

### Reflection

1. Consider the title *Distributing Blackness, Reprogramming Internet Art*. - What does this mean? How has your understanding of this changed after viewing the exhibition?
2. How did it feel to create artwork with data? If someone looked at your graph, what would it tell them about your experience?
3. What can avant-garde and experimental art be? Why did the authors and curators choose to present the artist's work on view like this?
4. This exhibit covered many centuries of art from Dave the Potter's work in the 1850's to Lorraine O'Grady's work in 2009. What connections do you see between the works over

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time? Why do artists investigate the themes of machines, race, and technology again and again?

5. If you were a curator, which artists would you add to this exhibition?

## Art-Making Activity

Lorraine O'Grady says "Both/And" which rejects the binary of "either/or" and instead offers an endless interconnectivity across multiple layers, logics, and planes. She will pair 2 seemingly disconnected images together and allow the viewer to find the connection. This pairing is called a diptych.

It's your turn to create your own diptych but in this activity, the images you select will join together in an optical illusion - truly embracing the Both/And!

### O'Grady Diptych Thaumatrope

Materials:

- Index cards
- Scissors
- Circle shape below
- Writing utensil
- Hole punch
- String

Instructions:

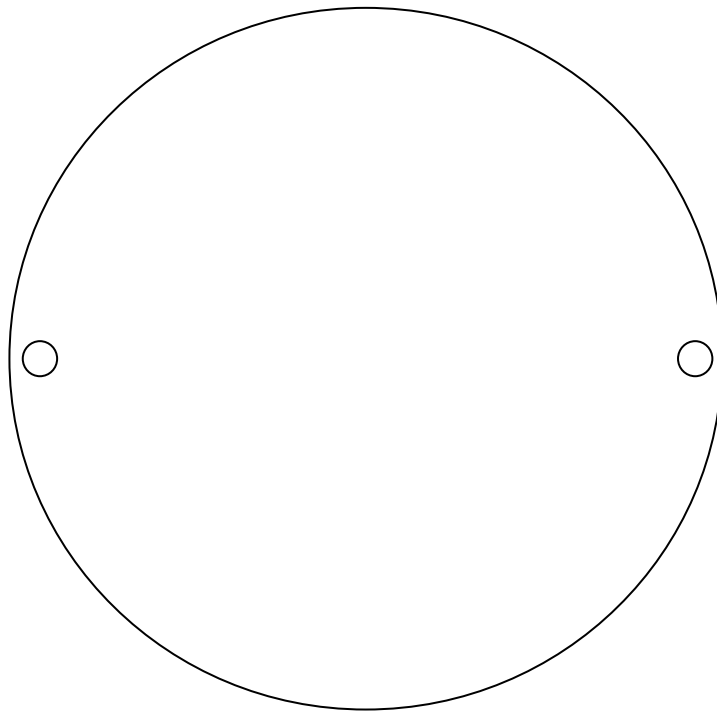
1. Think of 2 images you would like to merge together
  - a. What are 2 objects that feel connected to each other? They don't have to be logically related, but maybe feel connected in some way to you.
2. Cut out the below circle
3. Place circle on index card and trace it with your writing utensil
4. Cut out circle from index card
5. Draw one object on your circle
6. Flip your circle vertically and draw your 2nd image
7. Punch a hole in each side of your circle
8. Attach a string to each hole
9. Spin the strings and watch the images merge together

**[www.thekitchen.org](http://www.thekitchen.org)**

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