

Park Yuna, "Ian Cheng's Thought-Provoking AI-Based Art on Show at Gladstone Gallery," *The Korea Herald*, March 24, 2024



## Ian Cheng's thought-provoking AI-based art on show at Gladstone Gallery

By Park Yuna, March 24, 2024



"Thousand Lives" by Ian Cheng (Courtesy of the artist, Gladstone Gallery)

American artist Ian Cheng has returned to Seoul with his recent simulation work, "Thousand Lives," at Gladstone Gallery, two years after his first solo museum exhibition at the Leeum Museum of Art, where he showcased the integration of art and artificial intelligence.

Upon entering the gallery, visitors encounter what appears to be a video game screen showing a turtle named "Thousand" wandering around a messy room. As visitors move closer to the screen and lean down, the perspective on the screen will shift according to the angle from which it is viewed.

Next to this is a computer screen that indicates the metabolism and the needs of the turtle, showing that the turtle is developing a recognition of affordances, defined as the relation between the user and an object. It also develops recognition of threats in the messy apartment environment, constructing new motives to better satisfy its competing urges.



An installation view of "Life After BOB: The Chalice Study Experience (LABX)" at Gladstone Gallery in Seoul  
(Courtesy of the gallery, the artist)

"I believe we will soon be living in a world crowded with artificial agents -- systems that autonomously take action not just in response to their present state, but also their anticipated future states," the artist wrote on social media.

"To do that, they will have to be able to construct and update their models of the world and integrate their own needs with our demands on them. We may find ourselves having to negotiate with intelligent systems rather than command them," the artist continued.

The turtle that has a "thousand lives" will repeat the process of dying and reviving based on the data on its metabolism and needs.

The simulation "Thousand Lives" is an expansion of the artist's episodic anime series "Life After BOB" built in the Unity game engine and presented live in real-time. The anime series is based on the artist's thought-provoking idea, "What if AI could do the job of living your life better than you?"



Visitors watch "Life After BOB: The Chalice Study Experience (LABX)" at Gladstone Gallery in Seoul, March 5, interacting with the AI-based anime using their smartphones. (Park Yuna/The Korea Herald)

Those who want to learn about the artist's anime series can go to the downstairs part of the gallery where the interactive 50-minute anime, "Life After BOB: The Chalice Study Experience (LABX)," is being screened. The anime was previously shown at the Leeum Museum of Art. It centers on the life of Chalice, the first child to grow up with an AI symbiote called BOB (Bag of Beliefs). Visitors can use their smartphones as remote controls to pause any scene and tap on any character or entity in the frame to investigate its lore and mythology.

The messy apartment in "Thousand Lives" is Chalice's home, and the turtle is Chalice's pet.

The exhibition at Gladstone Gallery runs through April 13.