

G L A D S T O N E

Ian Cheng presents *BOB*, an artificial lifeform series, at Gladstone

Cheng's interactive artificial lifeform explores themes of life and death, behavior, and childhood impulses

Gladstone is pleased to announce an exhibition by Ian Cheng, the artist's debut with the gallery, and the United States premiere of *BOB* (Bag of Beliefs). The first in a new series of artificial lifeforms, *BOB* takes the form of a chimeric branching serpent.

BOB advances Cheng's use of simulation to focus on an individual agent's capacity to deal with surprise: the subjective difference between expectations and perception. Over the course of its lifetime, *BOB*'s body, mind, and personality evolve to better confront the continuous stream of life's surprises and metabolize them into familiar routines. Crucially, *BOB* incorporates the tutoring influence of the viewer to help offset *BOB*'s temptation to only satisfy its immediate impulses and childhood biases. As *BOB* dies many deaths – whether through failures of personality, bad parenting, random accident, or a life well lived – *BOB* may become synonymous with a reoccurring pattern of behavior, common across all *BOB* lifetimes, thereby manifesting the undying eternal characteristic of a god.

BOB features a unique model of AI composed of a congress of motivating "demons" and an inductive engine capable of learning rule-based beliefs from sensory experiences. Each demon functions as a micro-personality who obsessively attempts to fulfill its own micro-story. An eater demon forages for the food, a flight demon evades the threat, an explorer demon seeks that which lacks beliefs, among many others. Together the demons compete with one another for control of *BOB*'s body. The controlling demon operates under the premise that progress = minimal surprise: the smallest difference between the beliefs required by its micro-story and its current sensory perceptions. Great surprises upset *BOB*, causing emotional upheaval, but in turn signal *BOB* to update its beliefs. Over its lifetime, *BOB* may learn to apply its beliefs onto even the most outlandish stimuli, choosing to infer even a bad first impression and avoid being thrown into chaos in the present, but at the cost of further surprisal in the future.

Viewers who wish to influence *BOB*'s life may do so via *BOB Shrine*, a free iOS app available worldwide. Once downloaded, opened, and named, *BOB Shrine* allows viewers to publish patterns of stimuli to *BOB*, as well as caption their stimuli with a parental directive. *BOB Shrine* then automates the production of stimuli for *BOB* to choose without any further necessary engagement from the viewer. In return, *BOB* deposits special rewards to shrines it judges to be trustworthy parental forces. Visit BOBS.AI for more details.

The exhibition continues upstairs with production drawings from the conception, design, and development of *BOB*, shown here for the first time.

Exhibition Details

BOB

January 31 – March 23, 2019

530 West 21st Street + 1 212 206 7606
New York, NY 10011 gladstonegallery.com

GLADSTONE

530 West 21st Street
New York, NY 10011

About Ian Cheng

Ian Cheng (b. 1984, Los Angeles) lives and works in New York. Previous solo exhibitions include: *Worlding*, Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, South Korea (2022); *Life After BOB*, Light Art Space, Berlin, Germany (2022); *Life After BOB*, The Shed, New York, US (2021); *Life After BOB: The Chalice Study*, Luma Westbau, Zürich, Switzerland (2021); *Life After BOB: The Chalice Study*, Luma Arles, Arles, France (2021); *Emissary Trilogy*, Fundación Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Madrid (2020); *Emissary Forks at Perfection*, Espace Louis Vuitton Venezia, Venice (2018);* Ian Cheng Emissaries*, Julia Stoschek Collection, Berlin (2018); *Ian Cheng*, Serpentine Gallery, London (2018);* Emissaries*, MoMA PS1, New York (2017); *Forking at Perfection*, Migros Museum, Zurich (2016); *Emissary in the Squat of Gods*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2015). Previous group exhibitions include: Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, Italy (2023); Beijing Biennial, Beijing (2022); Julia Stoschek Collection, Düsseldorf, Germany (2022); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2022); Zabudowicz Collection, London, UK (2022); Kadist x G Museum, Nanjing, China (2021); M+, Hong Kong (2021); Luma, Arles (2020); De Young, Fine Art Museum of San Francisco (2020); Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2019); Venice Biennale (2019); MoMA, New York (2019); MAXXI, Rome (2018).

About Gladstone Gallery

Gladstone is recognized for its embrace of experimentation and visionary practices. The gallery has long been an active partner with artists pursuing catalytic ideas and engaging with pressing issues. Headquartered in New York, Gladstone's impact extends globally with galleries in Brussels and Seoul, enabling it to present new bodies of work and evolve its program to advance the practices and reach of its artists through time. Alongside its work with contemporary artists, the gallery is a steward of the legacies of pivotal historical artists and an advocate for the enduring power of their work. Gladstone is led by a team of partners who spearhead its long-term vision and program, building on the values of its founder Barbara Gladstone.

Press Contact

press@gladstonegallery.com