

AUGUST 22, 2024

## Discover Your Future—And Your Voice—in Downtown L.A.! The Music Center Invites Angelenos to Experience Two Innovative Art Installations on Jerry Moss Plaza Using AI

***The Music Center Presents: A More Than Human Tongue* Art Residency Features Ancestral Art of Coffee Ground Reading Resulting in AI-Generated Predictions Along with Unique Experience of Listening to One's Own Voice in Real-Time Replicated by AI**

**LOS ANGELES (August 22, 2024)** -- Angelenos will be all ears when experiencing a new AI art installation on Jerry Moss Plaza at The Music Center. Launching Thursday, August 29, 2024, and running through Sunday, November 3, 2024, *The Music Center Presents: A More Than Human Tongue* will explore the fusion of ancestral practices and modern technology with a pair of innovative experiences. The first experience, *One Who*



*Looks at the Cup*, is the brainchild of author, artist and researcher Mashinka Firunts Hakopian with Atlas Acopian and Lara Sarkissian, who uncover the practice of tasseography (the fortune-telling method of reading coffee grounds, dating back as early as the 16th century) reimagined through AI. The second experience *Voice in My Head*, created by L.A.-based artist and computer programmer Lauren Lee McCarthy and Kyle McDonald, delves into the inner workings of the mind, with guests hearing voices in their heads through the use of earbuds. The twist in this aural experience: The voice speaking to each participant is an AI-generated clone of the participant's own voice.

The two-part AI experience will last nearly an hour and will occur between 4:30-8:00 p.m. on Thursdays and Fridays as well as 1:00-8:00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Participants can reserve a time slot online at [musiccenter.org/tongue](https://musiccenter.org/tongue) or onsite on Jerry Moss Plaza at The Music Center. To maximize the personalized AI experience, only two individuals will be able to register for each time slot. *The Music Center Presents: A More Than Human Tongue* is the latest public art installation presented by The Music Center's **Digital Innovation Initiative (DII)** launched in 2022 and designed to explore and create digital and virtual reality experiences on The Music Center campus and throughout Los Angeles.

"*The Music Center Presents: A More Than Human Tongue* is an immersive journey into AI and human connection that has never been attempted before in The Music Center's 60-year history. The profound experience of hearing your own voice talk to yourself will be otherworldly without a doubt, yet it will reshape how we can better understand ourselves on an entirely new and extraordinary level," said Rachel S. Moore, president and CEO of The Music Center. "Moreover, the blending of AI into the centuries-old practice of tasseography will challenge our perceptions of technology influencing how we envision our future. Can artificial intelligence also replicate ancestral intelligence? I encourage Angelenos to find out for themselves in Downtown L.A.'s most unique AI experience to date."

Participants who register for *The Music Center Presents: A More Than Human Tongue* will begin their experience by checking in with a Music Center staff member at a designated kiosk adjacent to the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion on Jerry Moss Plaza. They will be served coffee in traditional Armenian ceramic coffee cups (custom made by artists Dahlia Elsayed and Andrew Demirjian) to initiate the tasseography process. While sipping their coffee, participants will watch an orientation video to learn more about the historical practice and then be instructed to write a single question on a small piece of paper. After submitting the question and smudging the leftover coffee grounds from the bottom of their

cups onto a motion sensor, participants will receive an AI-generated prediction, which will be displayed on a monitor screen in both English and Armenian, that responds to their question. The *One Who Looks at the Cup* experience, made in collaboration with creative technologist Hua Chai and video designer Danny Snelson, lasts approximately 25 minutes.

Immediately following the *One Who Looks at the Cup* component, each participant will be given a smartphone and pair of earbuds to set in motion the *Voice in My Head* experience. They will be invited to enter a private booth to converse individually with an AI program for a few minutes; from each one-on-one discussion, AI will clone the participant's recorded voice and transmit the voice into the participant's earbuds. The participants' own voices will prompt them to perform several tasks in real-time on Jerry Moss Plaza based on their conversation, challenging the notion of autonomy and the influence of technology on one's consciousness. Developed with support from an IDFA DocLab Commission as well as production support from UCLA Social Software, the *Voice in My Head* experience lasts approximately 25 minutes.

Born in Yerevan, Armenia, Mashinka Firunts Hakopian is a writer, artist and researcher. The Glendale resident is an associate professor in technology and social justice at ArtCenter College of Design and a 2024 Eyebeam Democracy Machine Fellow. Her book *The Institute for Other Intelligences* was published through X Artists' Books in 2022. With Meldia Yesayan, she co-curated the exhibitions *What Models Make Worlds: Critical Imaginaries of AI* at the Ford Foundation Gallery (2023) and *Encoding Futures: Critical Imaginaries of AI* at OXY ARTS (2021). Hakopian is a contributing editor for *ART PAPERS*, where she was a guest co-editor with Sarah Higgins for the spring 2023 special issue on AI. Her performances and projects have been presented at Centre Pompidou (Paris), the New Museum and Rhizome (New York City), the Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles), the Institute of Contemporary Art (Philadelphia) and elsewhere.

Lauren Lee McCarthy is an artist examining social relationships in the midst of automation, surveillance and algorithmic living. She has received grants and residencies from Creative Capital, United States Artists, LACMA, Sundance Institute, Eyebeam, Pioneer Works, Autodesk and Ars Electronica; her work is in the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art. Her work *SOMEONE* was awarded the Ars Electronica Golden Nica and the Japan Media Arts Social Impact Award, and her piece *LAUREN* was awarded the IDFA DocLab Award for Immersive Non-Fiction. McCarthy's work has been exhibited internationally, including the Barbican Centre, Fotomuseum Winterthur, Haus der elektronischen Künste, Seoul Museum of Art, Chronus Art Center, SIGGRAPH, Onassis Cultural Center, IDFA DocLab, Science Gallery Dublin and the Japan Media Arts Festival. She is also the creator of p5.js, an open-source art and education platform that prioritizes access and diversity in learning to code, with over 10 million users. McCarthy is a professor of design media arts at University of California, Los Angeles. She holds an M.F.A. from UCLA and bachelor's degrees in computer science as well as in art and design from Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"Mashinka and Lauren are both innovators on the forefront of blending emerging technologies with our everyday actions, whether it involves fortune telling, daydreaming or self-exploration. In fact, after reviewing presentations they designed for *The Music Center's Black Bar Social*, the performing arts destination's monthly speakeasy-style social gatherings, we asked them to curate together this AI-based residency," said The Music Center's Digital Innovation Initiative Director Kamal Sinclair. "AI is provoking a lot of questions about how, and if, we want it to be part of our daily lives and culture--the same questions that these two brilliant artists have been asking for well over a decade. The experiences they have created just might help you better grasp AI."

*The Music Center Presents: A More Than Human Tongue* makes use of OpenAI's ChatGPT and Whisper tools to sample a participant's voice and use it to generate responses during the *Voice in My Head* experience. OpenAI may securely retain a participant's data for up to 30 days for internal quality assurance purposes only. OpenAI will not use any of the data for training its models. The artist will not retain or share any of a participant's audio or any transcripts of it. The artist may retain the resulting text generated by ChatGPT for documentation purposes.

The Music Center's DII launched its first public exhibit, **We ARe Here: A Celebration of Legacy**, offering Angelenos the opportunity to learn--through AR and with hands-on artistic experiences in Gloria Molina Grand Park--about the legacies of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities and individuals who have contributed to Los Angeles County's rich diversity. Additional DII exhibits have included **Our Common Home**, which addressed issues of climate change by integrating participants' live facial expressions and physical movements into digital artworks created in real time and projected on Jerry Moss Plaza's LED screens, and **Cosmogony**, a fantastical digital performance that was broadcast live from a dance studio located 6,000 miles away in Geneva, Switzerland. Recently, from June to August 2024, DII launched **The Music Center Presents BLKNWS® in Residence**, a first-of-its-kind summer residency

featuring acclaimed L.A. artist and filmmaker Kahlil Joseph, which blurred the lines of art, journalism, entrepreneurship and cultural critique.

For more information about *The Music Center Presents: A More Than Human Tongue* resident, visit [musiccenter.org/tongue](https://musiccenter.org/tongue).

For more information about The Music Center's Digital Innovation Initiative, visit [musiccenter.org/DII](https://musiccenter.org/DII).

*The Music Center Presents: A More Than Human Tongue* is made possible by a grant from City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts and Sony Pictures Entertainment.

## CALENDAR LISTING

### WHAT:

#### ***The Music Center Presents: A More Than Human Tongue***

Explore the fusion of ancestral practices and AI--in less than an hour--with a unique art residency featuring two groundbreaking experiences: *One Who Looks at the Cup* (a coffee grounds reading culminating with AI-generated predictions to participants' questions) followed by *Voice in My Head* (a listening session of one's own voice transmitted through earbuds). *One Who Looks at the Cup* is created by Armenian writer, artist and researcher Mashinka Firunts Hakopian with Atlas Acopian and Lara Sarkissian; *Voice in My Head* is created by L.A.-based artist and computer programmer Lauren Lee McCarthy and Kyle McDonald.

Spearheaded by The Music Center's Digital Innovation Initiative (DII), which was designed to explore and create digital and virtual reality experiences throughout Los Angeles County, *The Music Center Presents: A More Than Human Tongue* showcases the profound ways AI interacts with our ancestral pasts and our present minds and reshapes how we understand our future.

### WHEN:

**August 29 - November 3, 2024**

**Thursdays & Fridays: 4:30-8:00 p.m.**

**Saturdays & Sundays: 1:00-8:00 p.m.**

**NOTE:** 7:00 p.m. is the last time slot offered each Thursday through Sunday.

### WHERE:

**Jerry Moss Plaza at The Music Center**

135 N. Grand Avenue

Los Angeles 90012

### ADMISSION COST:

**Reservations are required.** The Music Center suggests a \$15 fee per reservation, although any amounts between \$5-\$25 will be accepted. All reservation fees will benefit future free and low-cost programs at L.A.'s premier performing arts center.

### MORE INFO:

[musiccenter.org/tongue](https://musiccenter.org/tongue)

## ABOUT THE MUSIC CENTER

The Music Center convenes artists, communities and ideas with the goal of deepening the cultural lives of every resident in Los Angeles County. Celebrating its 60th year in 2024, the \$80 million non-profit performing arts organization has two divisions: TMC Arts and TMC Ops. TMC Arts, The Music Center's programming engine, provides year-round programming inside The Music Center's four theatres, on Jerry Moss Plaza, outside at Gloria Molina Grand Park--a 12-acre adjacent green space--in schools and other locations all over Los Angeles County. TMC Arts presents world-class dance with *Glorya Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center*, free and low-cost public concerts and

events, as well as live and digital K-12 arts education programs, workshops, performances, interactive experiences and special events. TMC Ops manages the theatres, the Plaza and Gloria Molina Grand Park, which comprise \$3 billion in county assets, on behalf of the County of Los Angeles. The Music Center is also home to four renowned resident companies--Center Theatre Group, Los Angeles Master Chorale, LA Opera and LA Phil. For more information, visit [musiccenter.org](http://musiccenter.org) and follow The Music Center on social media @MusicCenterLA.

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