



Donald R. and Joan F. Beall
Center for Art + Technology
University of California, Irvine

University of California, Irvine
Claire Trevor School of the Arts

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PRESS RELEASE

Hours: Monday – Saturday, 12-6 p.m.

Katherine Behar: Ack! Knowledge! Work! **Curated by Jesse Colin Jackson**



On View: February 3, 2024–April 20, 2024

IRVINE, Calif. (January 25, 2024) – The Beall Center for Art + Technology at the University of California, Irvine, is pleased to announce the opening of *Katherine Behar: Ack! Knowledge! Work*, curated by Jesse Colin Jackson. The exhibition opens on Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024, and will run through Saturday April 20, 2024.

Katherine Behar: Ack! Knowledge! Work! is the artist’s first solo show at the Beall Center. Behar looks towards digital automation and the future of labor. Developed since 2016, her series of sculptures, interactive installations, and videos appropriates technologies of office work—chairs, keyboards, and printer paper—in an effort to resist the reduction of self into units of productivity. At once a gesture of revolt and of witnessing, Behar invites audiences to “acknowledge” the invisible marks of labor which uphold digital networks, and to interrogate the supposed intelligence often bestowed upon the menial, and near-automatic “work” of white-collar office roles.

In Behar's hands, everyday office items shape-shift to defy their intended use. The robotic installation *Anonymous Autonomous*, premiering at the Beall after several years of trials and testing, presents an office devoid of human workers, in which the paper pushing normally performed by laborers is continued by office furniture. In the interactive installation *Indispensable*, a hand-sanitizer dispenser challenges power dynamics by defying expectations, aphorizing instead of assuaging. In the sculpture series *Shelf Life*, QWERTY keyboard keys coagulate into lively orbs and animate into bulbous projections. These works, among others, address how technologies of automation are reforming the future of work across labor domains.

"We understand that automation could lead to unemployment, but even so we wish tedious work could be automated away," said artist Katherine Behar. "Ultimately, these artworks are sympathetic when it comes to locating minor dignities in all jobs, regardless of who or what performs them. So, the exhibition entreats us: Ack! Knowledge! Work!"

A new work-in-progress created during Behar's Black Box Projects residency, *We Grasp at Straws (Take One)*, uses manual work and digital digits to reintroduce the human body to our virtualization technologies. Five dancers wearing motion capture suits embody fingers that collectively form a hand, grasping at body-scale straws. Where motion capture might typically enfold actors in a CGI skin, *We Grasp at Straws (Take One)* reveals its performers as they are, posing in MoCap suits in a chroma key studio, satirizing the elaborate and effortful production process of digital animation. Behar's work iterates on a previous piece, which made a parody of a robot's attempt to make baskets without human assistance, criticizing views of automation which assume total human replaceability.

"Simultaneously deploying sophisticated technologies and trenchant critique of these technologies, Katherine Behar's work is a pitch-perfect expression of our ambivalent moment," said curator Jesse Colin Jackson, Executive Director of the Beall. "Behar upends structures and systems we take for granted, creating a parallel universe in which the dystopia we've created is raised from our subconscious. Do technologies work for us, or do we work for them?"

Katherine Behar: Ack! Knowledge! Work! will be on view from February 3 through April 20, 2024. The opening reception will take place on Saturday, February 3 from 2–5 pm. The Beall Center offers free admission and open to the public during the academic year, Tuesday–Saturday from 12 noon–6 pm.

Katherine Behar: Ack! Knowledge! Work! is supported by The Beall Family Foundation and the Claire Trevor School of the Arts.

Image: Katherine Behar. *Anonymous Autonomous* (version 3), 2022. Interactive installation with modified office chairs, motors, sensors, custom electronics, custom software, computers, vinyl, paper, sound; variable dimensions. Photo: David Cecchetto. Image courtesy of the artist.

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About Katherine Behar

Katherine Behar is an interdisciplinary artist and critical theorist of new media. Through feminism and materialism, she explores gender, race, class, and labor in contemporary digital culture. She is known for projects that mix low and high technologies to create hybrid forms that are by turns humorous and sensuous. Behar's artwork is exhibited throughout North America and Europe and held in private collections. *Data's Entry | Veri Girişi*, a survey exhibition and catalog documenting eight years of work, was presented at Pera Museum, Istanbul. Additional solo exhibitions include *Shelf Life*, a site-specific installation at Trinity College, *Backups*, appearing at Framingham State University, and *E-Waste*, premiering with a catalog at the University of Kentucky and traveling to Boston Cyberarts Gallery. Since 2005 she has collaborated with Marianne M. Kim, exhibiting and performing as "Disorientalism." Behar is the editor of *Object-Oriented Feminism* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016), coeditor of *And Another Thing: Nonanthropocentrism and Art* (Punctum Books, 2016), and author of *Bigger than You: Big Data and Obesity* (Punctum Books, 2016). Her writing has been translated into Turkish, Portuguese, Russian, Lithuanian, and Spanish. Behar is Professor of New Media Arts at Baruch College and The Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

About the Beall Center for Art + Technology

The Beall Center is an exhibition and research center located at the University of California, Irvine, in the Claire Trevor School of the Arts. Since its opening in 2000, the Beall Center has promoted new forms of creation and expression by building innovative scholarly relationships and community collaborations among artists, scientists, and technologists and by encouraging research and development of art forms that can affect the future. For artists, the Beall Center serves as a proving ground – a place between the artist's studio and the art museum – and allows them to work with new technologies in their early stages of development. For visitors, the Beall Center serves as a window to the most imaginative and creative visual arts innovations. The curatorial focus is a diverse range of innovative, world-renowned artists, both national and international, who work with experimental and interactive media. The Beall Center received its initial support from the Rockwell Corp. in honor of retired chairman Don Beall and his wife, Joan – the core idea being to merge their lifelong passions of business, engineering, and the arts in one place. Today major support is generously provided by the Beall Family Foundation. For more information, visit <https://beallcenter.uci.edu>.

About the Claire Trevor School of the Arts

As UCI's creative engine, the Claire Trevor School of the Arts has proven itself to be a national leader in training future generations of artists and scholars who go on to inspire audiences in theaters, galleries and concert halls – as well as in entertainment and technology-related venues throughout the world. CTSA combines artistic training with a top-ranked liberal arts education. It is home to the departments of art, dance, drama and music, offering 15 undergraduate and graduate degree programs and two minors. CTSA is currently ranked No. 1 in affordable fine arts, drama/theater, and music degrees by the College Affordability Guide. Courses include extensive studio, workshop, and performance experiences; theoretical and historical studies; and arts and technology practices. CTSA's nationally ranked programs begin with training but culminate in original five invention. The distinguished, international faculty work across a wide variety of art forms and forge interdisciplinary partnerships with others across the campus. For more information, visit www.arts.uci.edu.

Images



Katherine Behar. *Anonymous Autonomous* (version 3), 2022. Interactive installation with modified office chairs, motors, sensors, custom electronics, custom software, computers, vinyl, paper, sound; variable dimensions. Photo: David Cecchetto. Image courtesy of the artist.



Katherine Behar. *Data Cloud (A Heap, A Mass, A Rock, A Hill)*, 2016. Keyboard keys, fabric, metal, adhesive, Styrofoam. 34" x 34" x 37". Photo: Christine Dalenta. Image courtesy of the artist.



Katherine Behar.
Photo: Marianne Kim. Image courtesy of the artist.

Selected high-resolution images for publicity may be downloaded from the [Google Drive](#).

The images are approved only for publication in conjunction with promotion of the exhibition. Reproductions must include the full caption information, and images may not be cropped or altered in any way or superimposed with any printing.

Exhibition Checklist

Indispensable, 2024

Hand sanitizer dispenser with floor stand, interactive kiosk, custom electronics, custom software, parametric speaker, sound

Courtesy of the artist

We Grasp at Straws (Take One), 2024–ongoing

Single-channel 4K video with sound

Courtesy of the artist

Knock Knock, 2019 (2024 update)

Amazon Echo devices with custom Alexa skills

Dimensions and duration variable

Courtesy of the artist

Anonymous Autonomous, 2023

Modified office chairs, motors, sensors, custom electronics, custom software, computers, vinyl, paper, sound

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the artist

Shelf Life, 2018

Keyboard keys, resin, Styrofoam, adhesive, media carts

Variable dimensions

Courtesy of the artist

Autoresponder.exe, 2012 (2016 update)

Single-channel 4K video, color, silent

Running time: 16:10 minutes

Courtesy of the artist

Data Cloud (A Heap, A Mass, A Rock, A Hill), 2016

Keyboard keys, fabric, metal, adhesive, Styrofoam

34" x 34" x 37"

Courtesy of the artist

Fact Sheet

Katherine Behar: Ack! Knowledge! Work!

Exhibition

On View: February 3–April 20, 2024

Curated by Jesse Colin Jackson

Events:

Public Opening Reception: February 3, 2–5 p.m.

Parallel Public Program will be announced on the website: <https://beallcenter.uci.edu/>

Location:

Beall Center for Art + Technology

Description:

Katherine Behar: Ack! Knowledge! Work! is the artist's first solo show at the Beall Center. Behar looks towards digital automation and the future of labor. Developed since 2016, her series of sculptures, interactive installations, and videos appropriates technologies of office work—chairs, keyboards, and printer paper—in an effort to resist the reduction of self into units of productivity. At once a gesture of revolt and of witnessing, Behar invites audiences to “ack-knowledge” the invisible marks of labor which uphold digital networks, and to interrogate the supposed intelligence often bestowed upon the menial, and near-automatic “work” of white-collar office roles.

Gallery Hours:

Tuesday – Saturday: 12–6 p.m.

Closed Sunday, Monday

Holiday closure: March 29

Parking:

UC Irvine [Mesa Parking Structure](#), 4000 Mesa Rd., Irvine, CA 92617

(Complimentary parking provided for the press preview with RSVP)

More Info:

<https://beallcenter.uci.edu/exhibitions/katherine-behar-ack-knowledge-work>