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**Mika Tajima Contemplates Technology and Contemporary Life in MATRIX 177 at  
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art**

Hartford, Conn. (May 31, 2017) – New York artist Mika Tajima will create a technology-driven, responsive installation for the 177th exhibition of the cutting-edge MATRIX contemporary art series at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art. “After Life” addresses the rise of predictive technology in computer algorithms used to anticipate future human behavior. The exhibition will open June 1 at the museum’s “Art After Dark” event from 5-8 p.m., featuring a gallery talk by the artist at 6:30 p.m., and will be on view through Sept. 3, 2017. Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art Patricia Hickson is organizing the exhibition.

Ubiquitous in modern life, and particularly, developed by the military and for e-commerce applications, various methods of automatic identification and data capture (AIDC)—from bar codes to Google searches—obtain and analyze personal information to predict and promote future human behavior. The computer algorithm Tajima uses in her installation “scrapes,” or extracts data from, social media and searches that information for indications of emotion; results are used to predict the future sentiment of the sampled population. “After Life” visualizes those artificial future expressions using both color and text. A hanging light installation controlled by the computer program oscillates in real time between violet (representing positivity) and orange (representing negativity); a stream of automatically generated text on a flat screen monitor

“writes” new, predictive-future messages, emulating the original form of the captured data.

The changing light conditions influence the viewer's experience of the exhibition space, three "furniture art" paintings hung on the perimeter walls and a sculpture, titled "Social Chair." Designed to theoretically accommodate four sitters, the sculpture refers to the new modular designs of work spaces which denote the contemporary way of working "collaboratively" and are also often found in casual places and in transit centers. "Social Chair" is constructed from hard walnut. Hot-tub jet nozzles allude to invisible pressure rather than the comfort of a spa. The conjoined seats face away from each other, manifesting the contradiction of a life where work never stops and collaborations are actually isolated.

"My recent work invokes technologies developed to control and affect the body, focusing on techniques that shape bodily experience of space and time in a built environment where work and leisure spaces have meshed," writes Tajima. "This is a space where the human body comes into tension with the machinist body and its constructionist logic of fragmentation and measurement."

"After Life" also includes the artist's "Art d'Ameublement," or "Furniture Art" paintings; rectangular Plexiglas boxes back-painted with thinly-layered spray paint serve as abstract, reflective elements in the installation. Subtitled with the names or geographic locations of uninhabited islands, the paintings are a counterpoint to a life fully integrated with technology.

"'After Life' presents a stark vision of contemporary life—a room illuminated by the future feelings of a population, an unsuitable social arrangement, gradient mirrors and machine-generated poetry," says curator Patricia Hickson. "Control is the focus of Tajima's critique. She draws attention to the reality of how we live our lives: while technology seeks to capture life, can we escape between the lines and out of view?"

## **Public Programs**

Mika Tajima will give a talk on June 1 at 6:30 p.m. during the museum's "Art After Dark" event. Curator Patricia Hickson will give a gallery talk on July 27 at noon. Both programs are free with museum and/or event admission.

## **Exhibition Credit**

Major support for MATRIX 177 has been provided by the National Endowment for the Arts. The MATRIX program is generously supported in part by Jeffrey G. Marsted and Marcia Reid Marsted and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art's Contemporary Coalition. Additional support for MATRIX 177 has been provided by 11R Gallery, New York. Support for the Wadsworth Atheneum is provided in part by the Greater Hartford Arts Council's United Arts Campaign.

## **About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art**

Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is the oldest continuously operating public art museum in the United States. The museum's nearly 50,000 works of art span 5,000 years, from Greek and Roman antiquities to the first museum collection of American contemporary art. The Wadsworth Atheneum's five connected buildings—representing architectural styles from Gothic Revival to modern International Style—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Hours: Wednesday – Friday: 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Admission: \$5 – 15; discounts for members, students and seniors. Free admission for Hartford residents with Wadsworth Welcome registration. Free "happy hour" admission 4 – 5 p.m. Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: [thewadsworth.org](http://thewadsworth.org).

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