

WHITNEY

Whitney Museum
of American Art
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PRESS RELEASE

WHITNEY MUSEUM LAUNCHES INTERACTIVE DIGITAL ART COMMISSION BY NANCY BAKER CAHILL OFFERING COLLABORATION THROUGH AUGMENTED REALITY



Visible from the Museum's outdoor terraces, the Whitney's latest artport commission is an interactive augmented reality work that transforms with audience participation.

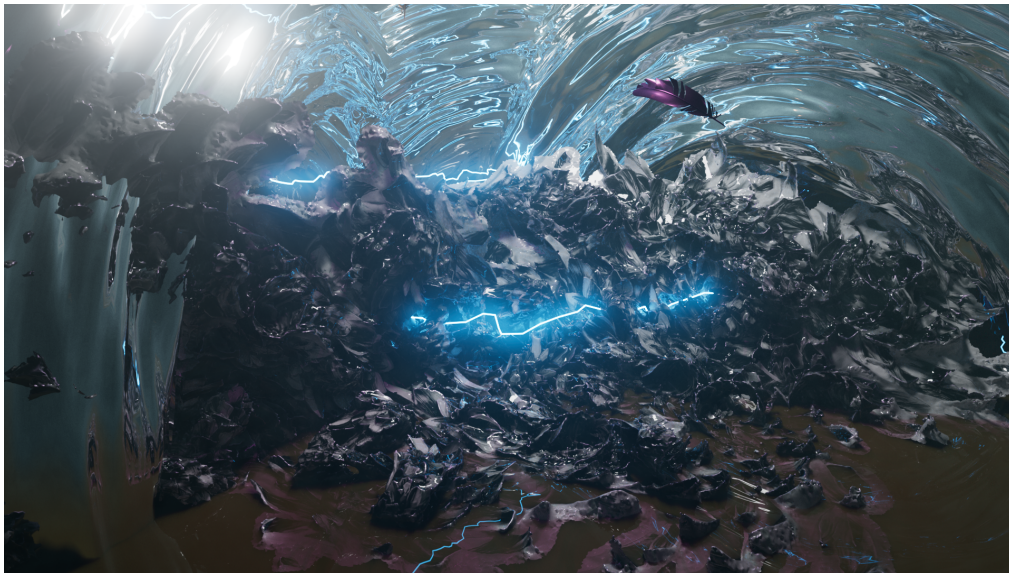
New York, September 14, 2023 — On October 3, the Whitney Museum of American Art will launch [CENTO](#), a new digital art project by artist Nancy Baker Cahill commissioned for artport, the Museum's online gallery space for net art. *CENTO* is a site-specific augmented reality (AR) creature whose evolution relies on the collective participation of visitors. Its monumental multi-species body will virtually soar over the Museum's terraces. Through Baker Cahill's free, artist-designed app, 4th Wall, users are invited to place feathers on the futuristic creature's body and witness its transformation.

Ever-evolving through participatory AR, *CENTO*'s serpentine body is lined with scales and fungal filaments, squid-like limbs, manta ray wings, a machine head, and vibrant feathers. Each of the twelve feathers provides a different evolutionary advantage, including communication, navigation, energy conversion, and memory, that are crucial to the creature's survival. The

interspecies amalgamation of body parts alludes to the collaborative nature of the creature's evolution. *CENTO* points to the need for interdependence and coexistence in the face of the climate crisis. The creature's anatomy accentuates the connections and mutual support needed to ensure the survival of life forms under changing conditions. *CENTO* takes its name from the term for a "collage poem," referring to poetry that consists of lines borrowed from a collection of writers' work. The artwork and its title poses the question of whether basic evolutionary needs could be fulfilled, or even exceeded, by a hybrid being imagined through a collage of human, machine, microorganism, and animal characteristics.

"As the first-ever collaborative participatory AR project commissioned by the Whitney, *CENTO* pushes the potential of participation" says Christiane Paul, Curator of Digital Art at the Whitney. "Nancy Baker Cahill's desire to introduce new audiences to immersive AR aligns with the Museum's digital art initiatives, and the linking of a site-specific and an online experience make this work unique within the Whitney's artport gallery."

Audiences can participate in *CENTO*'s collective transformation in multiple ways. Visitors to the Whitney can download the free 4th Wall app by scanning the QR codes on the terrace signage, virtually add their feather, and experience *CENTO*'s transformation live from the Museum terraces. The 4th Wall app can also be downloaded by following instructions at the end of a video featuring *CENTO*'s habitat featured on the Museum's artport [website](#). Online visitors can place their feathers and will be able to follow the creature's evolution through documentation on the artport site.



The *CENTO* video on [whitney.org](#), also viewable on the 6th floor terrace's video display, takes viewers into the cavernous, other-worldly habitat of the creature. It guides them through three environments—the nest, the refueling chamber, and the space where fuel is metabolized into energy before the creature takes flight.

"*CENTO* arrives at the Whitney during an inflection point in art history and the Museum. Under the trailblazing curatorial leadership of Christiane Paul, the Whitney has long supported

experimentation and risk-taking in American digital art,” says artist Nancy Baker Cahill. “As a holobiont (an assemblage of multiple species) whose survival depends on public participation, *CENTO* represents a kind of body politic. The pairing with the Whitney is ideal—an institution deeply dedicated to public engagement and establishing digital art within the art historical canon. There is no better location from which to view and interact with the creature than the open terraces of the Museum’s renowned building facing the High Line and local communities. The project underscores and reminds us of our interdependence and the invitation to work collaboratively to survive the accelerating climate crisis.”

CENTO is commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art for artport. The Whitney’s artport is overseen by Christiane Paul, Curator of Digital Art, with David Lisbon, Curatorial Assistant. More information on *CENTO* is available on [whitney.org](https://www.whitney.org).

4th Wall is a free, augmented reality public art platform founded by artist Nancy Baker Cahill to challenge traditional conventions of public art, introduce a participatory, immersive art experience, and explore AR’s potential to increase access to art. Caleb Craig is the sound designer for *CENTO* and AR development is produced by Shaking Earth Digital.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Nancy Baker Cahill (b. 1970) is an award-winning interdisciplinary artist whose hybrid practice spans research-based immersive experiences, video installations, and conceptual blockchain projects and focuses on systemic power, consciousness, and the human body. Her monumental augmented reality (AR) artworks extend and subvert the lineage of land art, often highlighting the climate crisis, civics, and a desire for more equitable futures. She is the Founder and Artistic Director of 4th Wall, a free, AR public art platform exploring site interventions, resistance, and inclusive creative expression. Baker Cahill’s work has been exhibited internationally at museums and galleries and has earned her profiles in publications such as *The New York Times*, *Frieze Magazine*, and *The Art Newspaper*; she also was included in ARTnews’ list of 2021 ‘Deciders.’ Her exhibitions include *Slipstream: Table of Contents* at Vellum, LA (2022), which was acquired by LACMA, and her traveling mid-career retrospective *Through Lines* at the Georgia Museum of Art (October 28, 2023–March 21, 2024).

Baker Cahill is an artist scholar alumnus of the Berggruen Institute, a 2021 resident at Oxy Arts’ ‘Encoding Futures’ focused on AR monuments, and a TEDx speaker. In 2021, she was awarded the Williams College Bicentennial Medal of Honor and received the C.O.L.A. Master Artist Fellowship. She is a 2022 LACMA Art and Tech Grant recipient.

ABOUT ARTPORT

artport is the Whitney Museum’s portal to Internet art and an online gallery space for net art and new media art commissions. Launched in 2001, artport provides access to original commissioned artworks, documentation of net art and new media art exhibitions at the Whitney,

and new media art in the Museum's collection. Recent commissions include Peter Burr's *Sunshine Monument* (2023); Rick Silva's *Liquid Crystal* (2023); Auriea Harvey's *SITE1* (2023); Amelia Winger-Bearskin's *Sky/World Death/World* (2022); Mimi Onuoha's *40% of Food in the US is Wasted (How the Hell is That Progress, Man?)* (2022); and Rachel Rossin's *THE MAW OF* (2022). Access these and more projects at whitney.org/artport.

PRESS CONTACT

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ABOUT THE WHITNEY

The Whitney Museum of American Art, founded in 1930 by the artist and philanthropist Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875–1942), houses the foremost collection of American art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Mrs. Whitney, an early and ardent supporter of modern American art, nurtured groundbreaking artists when audiences were still largely preoccupied with the Old Masters. From her vision arose the Whitney Museum of American Art, which has been championing the most innovative art of the United States for ninety years. The core of the Whitney's mission is to collect, preserve, interpret, and exhibit American art of our time and serve a wide variety of audiences in celebration of the complexity and diversity of art and culture in the United States. Through this mission and a steadfast commitment to artists, the Whitney has long been a powerful force in support of modern and contemporary art and continues to help define what is innovative and influential in American art today.

VISITOR INFORMATION

The Whitney Museum of American Art is located at 99 Gansevoort Street between Washington and West Streets, New York City. Public hours are: Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 10:30 am–6 pm; Friday, 10:30 am–10 pm; and Saturday and Sunday, 10:30 am–6 pm. Closed Tuesday. Visitors eighteen years and under and Whitney members: FREE. Admission is

pay-what-you-wish on Fridays, 7–10 pm. COVID-19 vaccination and face coverings are not required but strongly recommended. We encourage all visitors to wear face coverings that cover the nose and mouth throughout their visit.

Image credit:

Nancy Baker Cahill, screenshot of *CENTO*, 2023. Commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art

Nancy Baker Cahill, screenshot from video of *CENTO* habitat, 2023. Commissioned by the Whitney Museum of American Art

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