

# WHITNEY

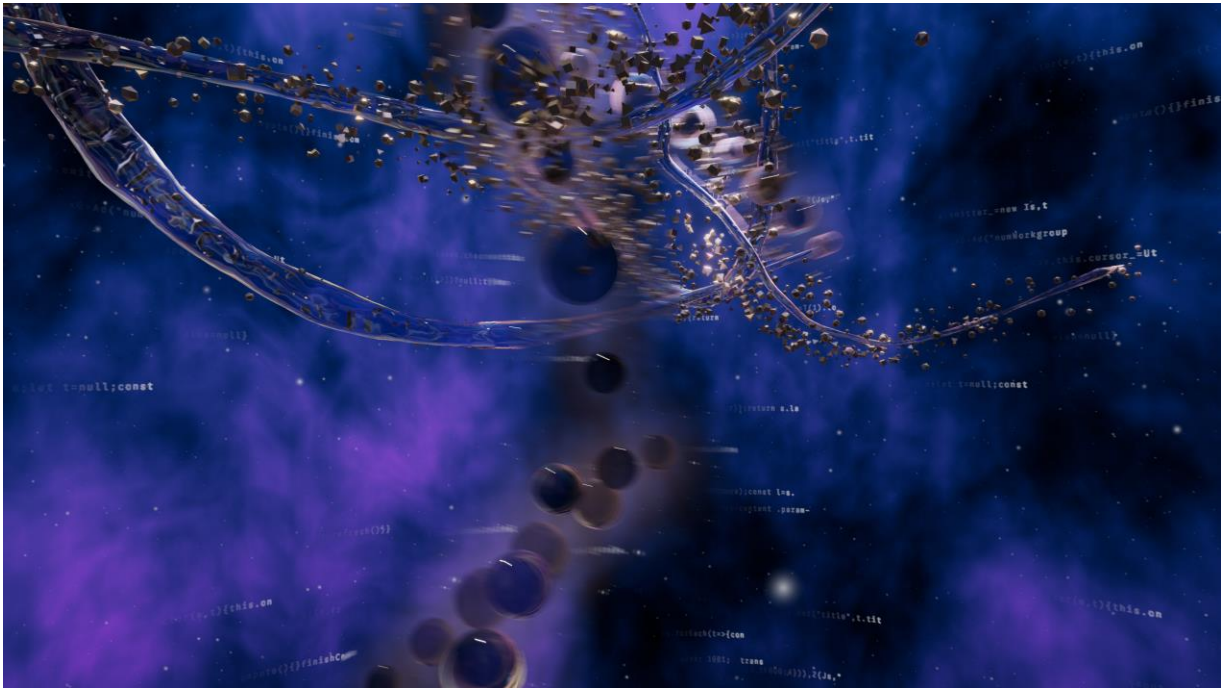
Whitney Museum  
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## PRESS RELEASE

### WHITNEY MUSEUM LAUNCHES MEMO AKTEN AND KATIE HOFSTADTER'S NEW DIGITAL ARTWORK EXPLORING SIMILAR DYNAMICS OF COMPUTER CODE AND BODIES OF WATER



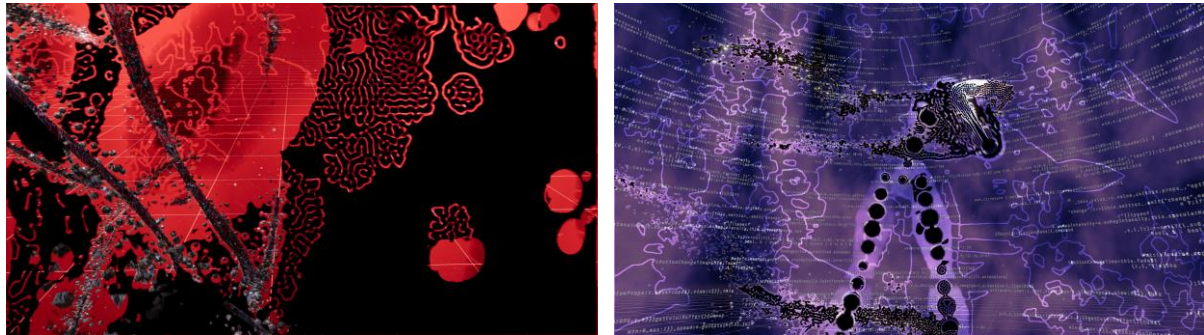
*Artists Memo Akten and Katie Hofstadter's latest project launches on [whitney.org](http://whitney.org) and examines parallels between the physics of fluids and the logic of code.*

**New York, NY, February 3, 2026** — The Whitney Museum of American Art launches [\*The Thinking Ocean\*](#), a digital art project by Memo Akten and Katie Hofstadter commissioned for artport, the Museum's online gallery space for Internet art. Part of the artists' *Cosmosapience* series, this project simulates a natural body of water that shifts between fluid dynamics and computational code. With *The Thinking Ocean*, Akten and Hofstadter explore the ways society grants agency to machines that mimic humanlike behavioral patterns, while overlooking the complex computations that similarly unfold in nature.

*The Thinking Ocean* situates viewers in an environment procedurally constructed with rule-based algorithms. The environment is fluid, dissolving into abstraction, and morphing into patterns that evoke biological cell structures, circuitry, and code. The shift between fluid behavior and computation uncovers that oceans and computers are governed by the same underlying logic, each serving as systems that carry, store, and transmit information. Recent

studies have shown that Navier-Stokes equations, which describe the fluid motions of elements such as water and air, can theoretically perform the same computations that digital computers are capable of carrying out. *The Thinking Ocean* exposes the increasing bias humans have in trusting technology that follows familiar logic but simultaneously overlooking patterns that are mirrored in the surrounding natural world.

“Both poetic and visually striking, *The Thinking Ocean* invites us to rethink our relationship to nature and bodies of water, in particular,” said Christiane Paul, Curator of Digital Art at the Whitney. “Drawing parallels between thinking, consciousness, fluid flows and computation, the work highlights the ‘operating systems’ we share with the natural environment.”



Upon entering *The Thinking Ocean*, viewers can navigate a seemingly organic underwater state, with clouds of suspended particles and bubbles drifting by. The motion of a faintly visible, abstract human form in the distance generates currents in the habitat, giving the impression that the ocean embodies agency and presence. A voiceover of a non-linear poem that is dynamically generated in real time accompanies viewers as they explore the layers of the fluid environment. Memo Akten and Katie Hofstadter’s *The Thinking Ocean* was organized by Christiane Paul, Curator of Digital Art at the Whitney and commissioned for artport, the Museum’s portal to Internet art and an online gallery space for commissions of net art and new media art. Contributions to the project included choreography and performance, and motion by Alexander Whitley; music and soundscapes by Paige Emery. Project support was also provided by Niklas Niehus, WebGPU consultant and developer, and Milana Aernova, studio assistant. *The Thinking Ocean* was developed in dialogue with researchers at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography’s SOARS Lab (Scripps Ocean-Atmosphere Research Simulator). More information about artport can be found at [whitney.org/artport](http://whitney.org/artport).

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Memo Akten & Katie Hofstadter** are interdisciplinary artists and researchers whose work investigates the entanglements of technology, consciousness, embodiment, and culture. Together, their collaborative research and practice explore how emerging technologies—particularly AI and data systems—interact with the embodied, emotional, and ecological dimensions of human experience.

**Memo Akten** (b. 1975, Istanbul, Turkey) is an artist, musician, and researcher whose practice bridges machine learning, consciousness, perception, and spirituality. He is a pioneer in artistic

explorations of Deep Neural Networks and a recipient of the Prix Ars Electronica Golden Nica (2013). His works have been exhibited worldwide, from the Shanghai Ming Contemporary Art Museum and the Moscow Museum of Modern Art to the Grand Palais in Paris, the Venice Biennale.

**Katie Hofstadter** (b. 1981, Macon, Georgia) is a multidisciplinary artist, writer, and curator whose work investigates the complex relationships between embodiment, consciousness, and technologically mediated imagination. Her projects have been exhibited worldwide, and her writing appears in publications like *Flash Art*, *BOMB*, and *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*. She is co-founder of global public art campaigns such as the ARORA network and the Climate Clock in NYC.

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## 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 Robert Nideffer's *12 Years in Azeroth – The Journey Begins* (2025); Frank WANG Yefeng's *The Levitating Perils #2* (2025); INFANT'S *BANNED SKILLS* (2025); Ashley Zelinkskie's *Twin Quasar* (2024); Maya Man's *A Realistic Day In My Life In New York City* (2024); Holly Herndon and Mat Dryhurst's *xhairymutantx* (2024); Nancy Baker Cahill's *CENTO* (2024); 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](https://whitney.org/artport).

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## PRESS CONTACT

For press materials and image requests, please visit our press site at [whitney.org/press](https://whitney.org/press) or 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.

### **Whitney Museum Land Acknowledgment**

The Whitney is located in Lenapehoking, the ancestral homeland of the Lenape. The name Manhattan comes from their word Mannahatta, meaning "island of many hills." The Museum's current site is close to land that was a Lenape fishing and planting site called Sapponckanikan ("tobacco field"). The Whitney acknowledges the displacement of this region's original inhabitants and the Lenape diaspora that exists today.

As a museum of American art in a city with vital and diverse communities of Indigenous people, the Whitney recognizes the historical exclusion of Indigenous artists from its collection and program. The Museum is committed to addressing these erasures and honoring the perspectives of Indigenous artists and communities as we work for a more equitable future. To read more about the Museum's Land Acknowledgment, [visit the Museum's website](#).

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## **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 twenty-five years and under and Whitney members: FREE. The Museum offers FREE admission and special programming for visitors of all ages every Friday evening from 5–10 pm and on the second Sunday of every month.

### **Image credit:**

Memo Akten & Katie Hofstadter, still from *The Thinking Ocean*, 2026

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