

Lauren Lee McCarthy **Bodily Autonomy**

EXHIBITION

MANDEVILLE
ART GALLERY

at UC San Diego

Exhibition Overview

Bodily Autonomy is Lauren Lee McCarthy's largest solo exhibition to take place in the United States to date. For the past fifteen years, McCarthy has worked in performance, video, installation, software, artificial intelligence, and other media to address how an algorithmically determined world impacts human relationships and social life.

The show brings together two major series of works by McCarthy—***Surrogate*** and ***Saliva***—to examine the current state of bio-surveillance. ***Surrogate*** takes the form of performances, videos, and installations wherein McCarthy offers her body up as a remote-controlled surrogate to individuals and couples interested in having a child. This proposition is never fully realized by the artist, but it prompts important conversations regarding familial norms, legal barriers, genetic manipulation, gender, and reproduction. ***Saliva*** is a series of performances, installations, and videos about DNA sampling through the routine collection of swabs and spit, and how this act requires a surrender of one's personal information. In a newly commissioned installation at the Mandeville Art Gallery, as a counter-gesture McCarthy devises a saliva exchange station where visitors can trade their own samples with one another through the assistance of an attendant. The process sidesteps the anonymity of medical and corporate entities, inviting visitors to consider and discuss their own data privacy and issues of race, gender, and class in relation to genetic material. Together, ***Surrogate*** and ***Saliva*** encourage a potent and timely dialogue regarding bodily autonomy in times of rapid technological development and increased corporate and government surveillance.

Bodily Autonomy marks the official premiere of *Surrogate* and *Saliva*, a Creative Capital-funded project.



Organizing Venue

Mandeville Art Gallery at UC San Diego
La Jolla, CA, March 2 – May 25, 2024

Confirmed Venues / National Tour

Gray Area
San Francisco, CA, June 2024

Artist

Lauren Lee McCarthy (she/they) is an artist having 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, Eyebeam, Pioneer Works, Autodesk, and Ars Electronica. Her work *SOMEONE* was awarded the Ars Electronica Golden Nica and the Japan Media Arts Social Impact Award, and her work *LAUREN* was awarded the IDFA DocLab Award for Immersive Non-Fiction. Lauren's work has been exhibited internationally, at places such as 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.

Lauren 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. She expanded on this work in her role from 2015–21 on the Board of Directors for the Processing Foundation, whose mission is to serve those who have historically not had access to the fields of technology, code, and art in learning software and visual literacy. Lauren is a Professor at UCLA Design Media Arts. She holds an MFA from UCLA and a BS Computer Science and BS Art and Design from MIT.

┆ <https://lauren-mccarthy.com>

Curator

Ceci Moss (she/her) is a curator, writer and educator with twenty years of professional practice organizing solo, group, touring, and online exhibitions, as well as public programs, performances and screenings, in museums, galleries and artist-run spaces. She currently serves as the Director and Chief Curator of the Mandeville Art Gallery at UC San Diego, a non-collecting institute for contemporary art with a five-decade history of presenting innovative exhibitions in the context of a major research university. She also holds a dual appointment as a Professor of Practice in the Department of Visual Arts, where she teaches courses in Museum and Curatorial Studies. Previously, she was the Founding Director of Gas, the Assistant Curator of Visual Arts at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, the Senior Editor of the art and technology non-profit arts organization Rhizome, and Special Projects Coordinator at the New Museum of Contemporary Art. She has a MA and PhD in Comparative Literature from New York University, and a BA in History and Sociology from U.C. Berkeley.

┆ <http://www.cecimoss.com>

Organizer

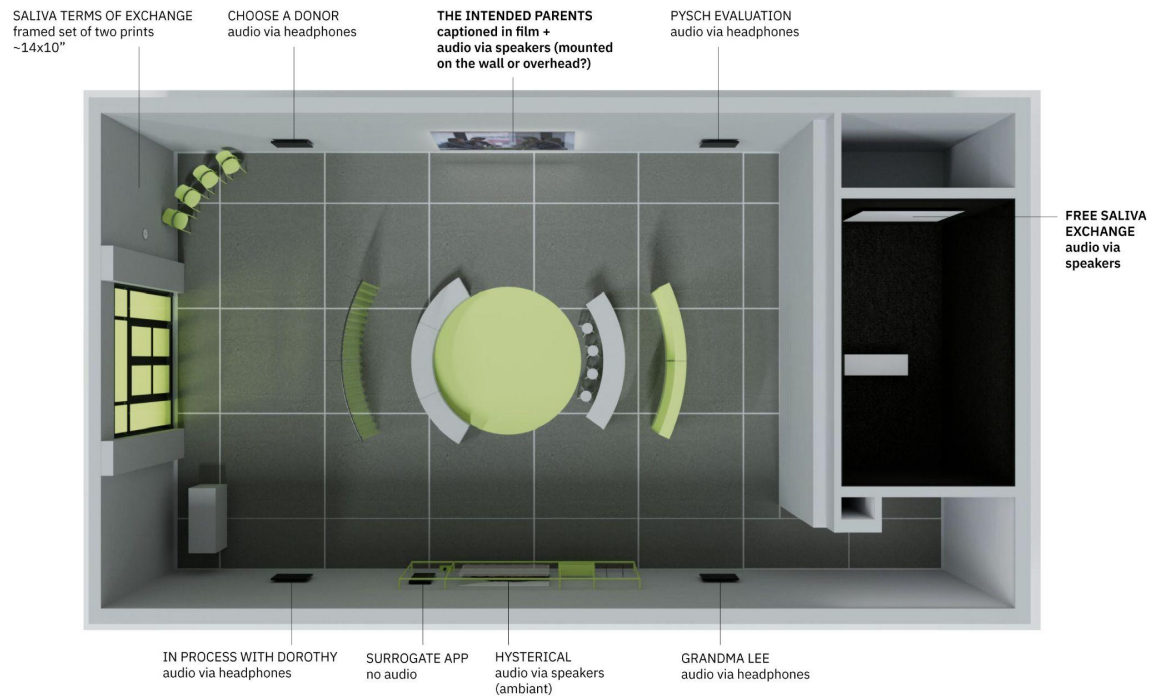
The Mandeville Art Gallery is an institute for transformative contemporary art.

Previously known as the University Art Gallery, the Mandeville Art Gallery is a long-standing fixture on the UC San Diego campus with a five-decade history of presenting innovative art in the context of a major research university.

Managed by the School of Arts and Humanities and located on the west end of the Mandeville Center for the Arts, the Mandeville Art Gallery operates as a venue for artistic exhibitions and events serving both the university and local community, and it newly re-opened after extensive renovations in March 2023.

↳ <https://mandevilleartgallery.ucsd.edu>

Floor Plan



--- For floor plan, see attached renderings.

Narrative

Lauren Lee McCarthy is one of the most highly acclaimed and internationally-recognized artists working in the field of art and technology today. **Bodily Autonomy** is her largest solo exhibition organized in the United States to date, and the show marks the official premiere of her Creative Capital-funded projects **Saliva** and **Surrogate**. Her practice delves into the cultural impact of algorithmically-determined life, and how new technologies influence human relationships and social systems. Using a variety of mediums such as performance, software, electronics, internet, film, photography, and installation, her projects bring to light how algorithms and automation define human behavior and interaction. Situating her interventions into the everyday, such as acting as a human version of Amazon Alexa in her series **LAUREN**, her works provoke feelings of humor, discomfort, and recognition, inviting audiences to understand how new tools influence their lived realities. All of the components of **Bodily Autonomy** have been custom designed to pack and ship for a tour, and the exhibition's footprint allows maximum flexibility for various configurations.

Bodily Autonomy will present a newly commissioned exchange station for **Saliva**, which can be activated by several performances throughout the run of the exhibition, like a popup speakeasy. Recreating a retail experience similar to a cocktail bar or marijuana dispensary, an attendant offers visitors a personalized saliva selection experience, guiding them in choosing the perfect sample based on each donor's physical, personality, and lifestyle characteristics. During the exchange, attendants ask visitors to spit into a vial and complete a form describing their informational profile, one adapted from a sperm donor form. Once their intake is complete, their spit is filed into the collection on display. Then, after a conversation with the attendant, donors can review samples and select a vial to take home.^[1] As we are regularly asked to surrender ownership of our bodily substances containing our DNA, personal information and identity to companies and government-run centers, **Saliva** undercuts this enterprise by allowing people to exchange their information with each other. **Saliva** opens a conversation around biosurveillance, data privacy, and bodily boundaries. In addition, the performance installation can be used as a gathering space for public programs, such as reading groups, and it is accompanied by a new film **Free Saliva Exchange** that contextualizes the project.

Bodily Autonomy also presents sculptures, an app, and films from McCarthy's series **Surrogate**, on view on a custom-built plastic wall display and as numerous vignettes that can be shown flatscreens or back-to-back in a single channel projection. For this project, McCarthy personally offers her body as a remote-controlled surrogate to carry someone else's child for nine months. The film and performance follow McCarthy as she discusses this proposition to potential parents and intensively navigates the process with consultation from doctors, psychologists, fertility specialists, surrogates, doulas, midwives, and geneticists. In McCarthy's words, "This deeply personal work offers my body as physical, emotional, and conceptual surrogate for understanding

reproduction and technology's role in it. The act of becoming a remote control surrogate serves as a metaphor for the control we may soon hold through processes of genetic engineering, as well as the immediate infringement on our bodily autonomy enacted by the legislation of reproductive rights worldwide." The project has been under development for several years with support from multiple competitive awards and residencies such as Creative Capital, United States Artists Fellowship, MacDowell Fellowship, Sundance Institute New Frontier Story Lab, Sundance Institute Art of Practice Fellowship, Pioneer Works Tech Residency, and KW Institute for Contemporary Art.

By showcasing both of McCarthy's major works *Saliva* and *Surrogate* alongside one another, ***Bodily Autonomy*** invites the public to fully consider the social, political, legal, and experienced implications of the future path of genetic development, reproductive technologies, biosurveillance and data privacy. The exhibition acts as a platform and social space generating urgent conversations and inquiry on these topics, one responsive to each host institution's local audiences and wider community.

[1] The safety procedures and training for attendants, approved with council from UC San Diego's Environmental Health and Safety team, ensure that no staff will come into direct contact with saliva.

Public Programs

We encourage host institutions to create exhibition-related public programming based on their local audiences and histories.

Any expenses incurred for events beyond an Exhibition Tour led by the curators would be assumed by the host institutions.

Sample programs:

- L Exhibition Tour with Curator Ceci Moss and Artist Lauren Lee McCarthy.
 - This event would not require an additional presentation fee.
- L Lectures
- L Reading Groups
- L Film Screening



Checklist with Images & Video Files

Saliva



Saliva Bar

Performance installation, sculpture, software



TERMS OF EXCHANGE

Both saliva donors agree to these terms of exchange (check all that apply, amend as you like):

- This saliva may not be used to determine ancestry.
- This saliva may not be used for reproduction of biological matter.
- This saliva may not be used by insurance providers.
- This saliva may not be used for criminal tracing.
- This saliva may not be used to create weapons.
- This saliva may not be used for research.
- This saliva may be publicly exhibited. No identifying information may be shared beyond what is entered on the saliva label.
- This saliva will be stored and preserved by the owner for as long as possible.
- This saliva _____

Signature, Date:

Signature, Date:

FIND A MATCH

You may use any criteria you wish to select a person to exchange saliva with. Here are some questions you might ask to make your decision.

- Which characteristics are you looking for in a saliva donor?
- What are three reasons someone might want your saliva specifically?
- Who are three people whose spit you'd like to own?
- How would you describe yourself?
- What were your favorite activities as a child?
- Which abilities do you feel most confident about?
- How do you describe your ancestry?
- Do you sleep well?
- What do you value?
- If you could change something about yourself what would it be?
- _____

Saliva Terms of Exchange

Prints, framed set of two, ~14x10"



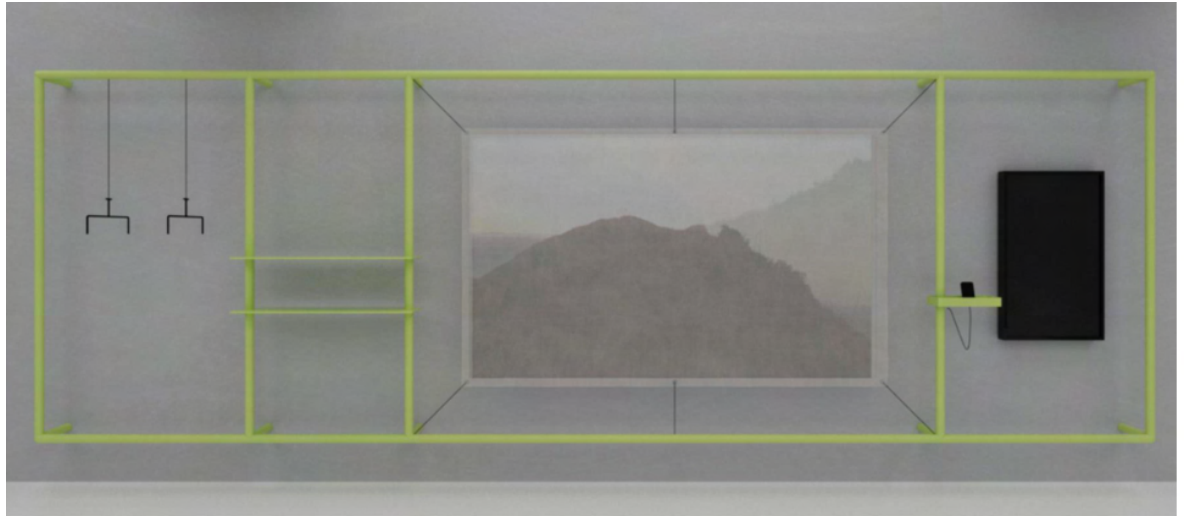
Free Saliva Exchange

Film with sound, 30-45 mins

In progress, to premiere at Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement 2023 in Geneva in January.

Projected with audio in screening room

Surrogate



Prosthetic Belly Devices

Sculpture, silicone, custom electronics



The Intended Parents

Film with sound, 4:38, projected in gallery with sound



<https://vimeo.com/805983559>

Grandma Lee

Video with
sound, 2:05,
played on monitor
in gallery with
headphones



... <https://vimeo.com/564358294>

**Psych
Evaluation**

Video with
sound, 1:47,
played on monitor
in gallery with
headphones



... <https://vimeo.com/666957059>

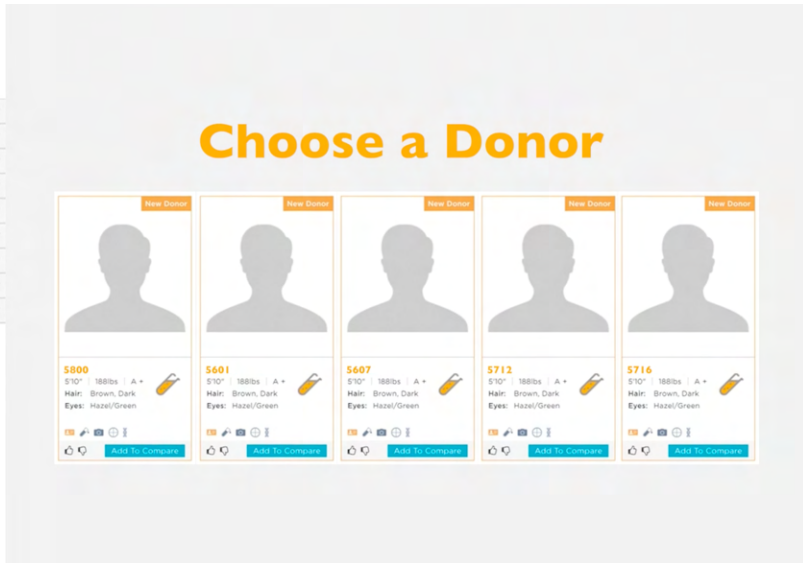
Hysterical

Film with
sound, 9:24,
projected in
gallery with
headphones



... <https://vimeo.com/746749622>

- Black
 - Blue
 - Brown
 - Green
 - Hazel
- Race ▼
 - Nationality ▼
 - Jewish Ancestry ▼
 - Religion ▼
 - Blood Type ▼
 - CMV Status ▼
 - Height ▼
 - Weight ▼
 - Genetic Testing ▼



Choose a Donor

Video with sound, 2:11, played on monitor in gallery with headphones

... <https://vimeo.com/746774108>



Surrogate App

Video of software no sound, 2:10, played on vertical monitor in gallery

... <https://vimeo.com/805980798>

In Process with Dorothy

Video with sound, TBD, played on monitor in gallery with headphones

Currently in progress

Touring Fact Sheet

↳ [Exhibition Website](#)

Number and type of objects

- 1 Overhead Lamp
- 1 Vinyl Flooring
Produced by host institution
- 3 Curved Benches
- 1 Bar
- 1 Saliva Display Unit
- 1 Plastic Curtain with railing
- 1 Surrogate PVC Wall Pipe Structure
- 4 White Stools
- 4 Green Chairs
- 1 Clock

A/V equipment

- 8 Media Players
- 3 Projectors
- 3 Pairs of speakers and stereo receivers
- 5 Flat-screen monitors, wall-mounted
5 medium [approx. 40"]
- 8 HDMI or RCA cables
approx. 5' in length
- 4 Sets of wireless headsets

If programming Exhibition Tour with Curator or artist: Small wireless microphone/s and PA system

Free wifi in gallery spaces preferred, but not required

Vinyl

- ↳ Title Wall
- ↳ See attached PDF for vinyl colors & files (includes additional vinyl orders, pending on host institution's needs).

Pedestals, Platforms, Furniture

All pedestals, exhibition furniture and displays are provided.

Shipping and crating

- ↳ Shipping and pro-rated crating will be the responsibility of the host institution.
- ↳ Pro-rated customs fees will be the responsibility of international host institutions.

Contact

Ceci Moss

Director and Chief Curator, Mandeville Art Gallery

--- cmoss@ucsd.edu

Organizer

Mandeville Art Gallery at UC San Diego

Available time slots

Available beginning July 2024 for periods of 2 to 4 months.

Space requirement

The installation requires approximately **2500 square feet** of exhibition space.

Security

- ↳ Gallery guards/attendants present during all gallery and event hours.
- ↳ Exhibition and storage facilities should be fully locked when gallery is closed.
- ↳ All designated security devices must be utilized as described in the installation guide.

Exhibition and graphic design

- ↳ Mandeville Art Gallery at UC San Diego has developed the design of the exhibition.
- ↳ Mandeville Art Gallery will provide the host institution with basic exhibition and graphic design that can be adapted to the host's galleries (subject to final approval by the artist and curator).

Participation fee

- ↳ Transportation, accommodations and per diems for Curator and Artist; exhibition and graphic design adaptation; and purchase of optional items are the responsibility of the host institution. See Technical Requirements Summary below for details.
- ↳ Local costs like unloading and loading, unpacking and repacking, artwork and crate storage, installation and dismantling, wall-to-wall insurance, printed materials, public programs and opening events, promoting and publicizing, all local maintenance are the responsibility of the host institution.
- ↳ An additional artist fee for Lauren Lee McCarthy is recommended and can be determined in consultation with the host institution.

Travel/Oversight

Travel expenses (originating from La Jolla, CA), hotel accommodations, and per diems for Artist and Curator for 3-5 full days of work on site and travel days. Artist and Curator will oversee installation of exhibition with host institution's installation crew.