Manchester Art Gallery

Press Release

MANCHESTER ART GALLERY TO PRESENT *THE IMITATION GAME*
AN EXHIBITION OF WORK BY EIGHT INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS EXPLORING MACHINES AND THE IMITATION OF LIFE

13 FEBRUARY 2016 – 5 JUNE 2016


(L) Mari Velonaki, *Fish-Bird*, 2003-present. Courtesy the artist (R) James Capper, *TELESTEP*, 2015. Courtesy the artist, Hannah Barry Gallery, London and Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York

SHOW TO INCLUDE VIDEO, SCULPTURE, PERFORMANCE AND INSTALLATION WORK BY ED ATKINS, JAMES CAPPER, PAUL GRANJON, TOVE KJELLMARK, LYNN HERSHMAN LEESON, DAVID LINK, MARI VELONAKI AND YU-CHEN WANG
CURATED BY CLARE GANNAWAY

The Imitation Game
13 February 2016 – 5 June 2016
Press view: 12 February 2016

I propose to consider the question, "Can machines think?... Are there imaginable digital computers that would do well in the imitation game?"
Alan Turing, Computing Machinery and Intelligence, 1950

In February 2016, Manchester Art Gallery will present *The Imitation Game,* an exhibition by eight international contemporary artists who explore the theme of machines and the imitation of life. The exhibition will include work by artists Ed Atkins, James Capper, Paul Granjon, Tove Kjellmark, Lynn Hershman Leeson, David Link, Mari Velonaki and Yu-Chen Wang. With a title inspired by Alan Turing's 'Turing Test', devised to test a computer's ability to imitate human thought, introduced in an article while he was working at The University of Manchester, The Imitation Game will include three new commissions and works never before seen in the UK.

Manchester has a rich history of computer science, as the birthplace of the industrial machine-age, where the world's first stored-program computer was developed. The exhibition looks back to Turing's timeless questions about our relationship with the machine, and explores their continuing relevance today. *The Imitation Game* will form a major contribution to Manchester's role as European City of Science 2016 with new commissions, a publication and a public programme of talks, performances and workshops.

The exhibition will include:

- Lynn Hershman Leeson, renowned for her pioneering use of new technologies and exploration of human/machine relationships over three decades. Hershman Leeson will show *Agent Ruby* (1998-2002), an artificially intelligent web agent. Over time, Ruby's software has allowed her conversational abilities to become increasingly sophisticated, pointing to her seemingly independent craving for full personhood and recognition as a human being.

- Paul Granjon is interested in the co-evolution of humans and machines. He will create a new work, *Am I Robot*, featuring a robotic presence which will roam the gallery, interacting with visitors in some surprising and intriguing ways. Granjon will also present a live performance during the exhibition.

- Tove Kjellmark's is creating a new robotic artwork in collaboration with the School of Computer Science at The University of Manchester and KTH, Stockholm. Two robots discuss the nature of human consciousness, their behaviour determined by *SpiNNaker* brain-simulation technology developed in Manchester.

- In 2015, Yu-Chen Wang was the Museum of Science and Industry's artist-in-residence, supported by the Taipei Representative Office in the UK. Her research on machine objects in the museum's collection has inspired an ambitious new work, *Heart to Heart*, exploring human qualities in machines, to be shown at both Manchester Art Gallery and the Museum of Science and Industry, including a science fiction text, live performances, a film and installation.

- David Link's installation *LoveLetters 1.0* is directly inspired by the history of computing at The University of Manchester and explores the relationship between machine logic and the imagination. In 1953-4, strange love-letters appeared on the Computing department noticeboard. One of the very first software developers, Christopher Strachey, had programmed a very early computer to generate love letters. In a meticulous restoration project, Link has written a contemporary version of the program to run on a replica computer.

- James Capper creates walking, climbing, drawing machines inspired by the aesthetics of earth moving equipment and industrial machinery. Capper will present *TELESTEP*, a new prototype walking sculpture, which he will operate live in the gallery on advertised dates during the exhibition. He will also show an existing work, *TREAD TOE,* outside the gallery building.

- Mari Velonaki's *Fish-Bird* is an interactive installation that explores the relationship between two characters (robotic wheelchairs) called Fish and Bird, who have fallen in love but cannot successfully be together. Communicating through movement and text. Fish and Bird are responsive to the presence of gallery visitors, their own relationship and "emotional states", with incredibly complex and unpredictable behaviour.

- For Manchester International Festival in 2015, UK artist Ed Atkins presented *Performance Capture* at Manchester Art Gallery. Performances by MIF artists were captured onto computer, digitally modelled, cut and soundtracked, and then screened as a single computer-generated figure or avatar. For *The Imitation Game*, Atkins returns to Manchester Art Gallery with his final video work from the *Performance Capture* process.

Maria Balshaw, Director of the Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester and Manchester City Galleries said: "The Imitation Game will explore the legacy of Turing's ideas through extraordinary work by eight international artists. The exhibition is taking shape thanks to

ambitious collaborations and I am delighted that Manchester Art Gallery will make such a great contribution to the cultural programme for City of Science 2016."

LISTINGS
Exhibition: *The Imitation Game*
Dates: 13 February 2016 – 5 June 2016
Press View: 12 February 2016
Venue: Manchester Art Gallery, Mosley Street, Manchester, M2 3JL
Tel: 0161 235 8888 Textphone: 0161 235 8893
Hours: Open daily, 10am - 5pm and Thursdays 10am- 9pm
Website: www.manchesterartgallery.org
Entry: Free

For further press information and to request images please contact Emma Morgan at SUTTON on + 44 (0) 20 7183 3577 or email emma@suttonpr.com

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Notes to Editors

About Manchester Art Gallery
Half a million people visit Manchester Art Gallery every year. They come for our historic collections, to see new work by some of the world's best known artists, and to take their pick of our diverse mix of fine art, fashion, furniture, craft, design and more. They stop by a local gallery that's owned and operated by Manchester City Council, but which is also international in its outlook. They come to be creative, or to play. They come to meet friends. They see something new on each and every visit, and they enjoy our mix of events, late night openings, and a great shop and café. And they have come to expect new ideas and fresh debate from a gallery that is and always has been open to all. www.manchesterartgallery.org

About City of Science 2016
In 2016 the title of European City of Science comes to the UK for the first time. Manchester the city of Dalton, Rutherford and Turing will host a yearlong celebration of science and innovation – the highlight being the EuroScience Open Forum 2016, Europe's largest multi-disciplinary science meeting (23 – 27 July). Wrapped around the conference will be a festival taking science to the streets of Manchester. Visit www.manchestersciencecity.com to discover more.

About the School of Computer Science at the University of Manchester
The School of Computer Science is one of the oldest in the UK. The University of Manchester has made a considerable contribution to the development of computing. This includes many firsts including the first stored program computer, the first floating point machine, the first transistor computer and the first computer to use virtual memory. The school celebrated its 50th anniversary during 2014.

About Museum of Science and Industry
The Museum of Science and Industry tells the story of where science met industry and the modern world began. It is situated on the historic site of the world's first passenger railway station, built in 1830, and its rich collections include extraordinary objects from steam engines to the earliest computers, from 19th century textile looms to the latest scientific innovations. The museum's mission is to inspire all its visitors, including future scientists and inventors, with the story of how ideas change the world, through its collections, public programmes and exhibitions.
www.msimanchester.org.uk