Image Syncers

Western Front is pleased to present *Image Syncers*, a solo exhibition by Canadian-British artist Nina Davies. The exhibition responds to current TikTok trends in which people mimic artificially generated videos, with Davies reimagining this choreographic phenomenon as a tool to disrupt visual economies and open up alternative modes of meaning-making.

At the centre of the exhibition is a 12-minute video narrated by an episode of the fictional podcast *What's Sizzlin'.* In it, host Bryce Snyder interviews journalist Teagan Carroll about her exposé on a break-in at the Trutch Seed Bank. Carroll reveals that the group responsible, known as Plot Corps, physically reproduced AI-generated imagery to evade detection. Their discussion expands into broader reflections on "perception-collapse," "image syncing," and the evolving relationships between language, images, and bodies in a world shaped by synthetic media.

Accompanying the video are sculptural works that expand the narrative world. A series of holographic forms appear as spectral stand-ins for the fictional Image Syncers, while transparent, vitrine-like backpacks display their personal belongings. These include smart-phones showing images and footage of performances that evoke AI-generated scenes, yet were created entirely through analogue means—costumes, props, makeup, and lighting—as well as the "cursed hands" used by the characters to interface with generated worlds or manipulate real-world events.

On Jan 16, 17, 23, and 24, the exhibition will be activated by a performance in the Grand Luxe Hall structured as a fictional gathering of Image Syncers. Four dancers enact AI-inspired gestures using analogue techniques, showing how generated footage can be simulated by the body, blurring the line between human and synthetic movement.

POST SIMULATION
Ruby Justice Thelot

Are the machines speaking to us?
Are they leaving traces, signs, clues?
Are their messages encrypted in the saccadic
movements seen in AI-generated videos of people?
What do we make of the sibylline and cryptic
pictograms produced by perturbed diffusion models?
What do we make of images woven through waves
of winding backpropagations?
As we look into the model, does the model look back?
And if so, does it speak in return?

Nina Davies's video work *Image Syncers* strikes
me as belonging to what I call "the post-simulation."
Post-simulation describes the state of our
contemporary epoch whereby the blurring between
reality and simulation has been fully achieved and
new objects are now being formed. In *Simulations*,
French philosopher Jean Baudrillard presents the
concept of "simulacrum" or a representation without
an original, a figure that persists even after any
grounding referent has vanished.[1] The simulation
is neither deceptive nor artificial. In the words of
Baudrillard, "The simulacrum is never that which
conceals the truth—it is the truth which conceals
that there is none. The simulacrum is true."[2]

For Baudrillard, this interweaving of simulation and
simulacra causes a cultural delirium, a recognition
that meaning itself becomes unstable once images,
models, and signs proliferate without an anchor. The
simulacrum marks a world in which representation
detaches from reality and begins to circulate
according to its own internal logic, to meander wildly
in a dangerous ontological drift. The idea of the
simulacrum still resides within the Saussurean logic
of sign and signifier—the binary relationship between
a word and what it means, or an image and what it
represents. That world no longer exists. A new one
is on the horizon. In *Image Syncers*, Davies explores
our newfound multipolar world of meaning with its
multi-directional and multi-dimensional arrows of
significance. The antiquated models of semiotics no
longer apply. We need new models, new narratives,
new dances.

By seamlessly moving between simulation and generation,
Davies's artwork layers strata of fictions to highlight
our new condition. *Image Syncers* follows a group
of dancers who imitate the movements of humans
observed in AI-generated videos. The dancers inhabit
the stutters, glitches, and discontinuities of machinic
motion, performing bodies that appear algorithmically
misrendered, as if they had slipped out of the frame
of human legibility and into the error language of
computer vision. Their AI-like movements operate
as a tactical grammar of evasion and fakery, a
choreography calibrated to the epistemic conditions
of "default fakeness."[3] Instead of assuming something
is real unless proven otherwise, the order flips:
we begin from suspicion, and authenticity becomes
the exception that must be demonstrated.

Image Syncers embraces post-simulation and begs
the question: what can be smuggled under the cover
of presumed fakery? To move like AI is to exploit
a perceptual blind spot, to fold the body into the
ambient noise of synthetic images and thereby test
how far choreography can function as both camouflage
and threat in a world where being misclassified or
dismissed as artificial may be the most effective
way to act without being seen.[4] The work seeks to
both explicate the visual logic of the AI image and
bring it back into the domain of lived corporeality.
Bodies influenced, learning from AI, learning from the
machine.

I am reminded of Alan Turing's famous remark:
"Machines take me by surprise with great frequency."[5]
Confronting *Image Syncers* first as a dance work,
I am struck by that same sense of novelty and
astonishment. The dancers' staccato, fragmented,
almost disarticulated gestures appear as if they
originate from another world—movements that feel
unfamiliar, as though the body were learning to
translate a language that machines have only just
begun to invent. The surprise here is an encounter
with non-human beauty, machinic beauty. Dance critic
Edwin Denby often spoke about how beauty emerges
through disciplined, embodied motion. He wrote,
"They dance and as they do, create in their wake an
architectural momentum of imaginary weights and
transported presences. Their activity does not leave
behind any material object, only an imaginary one."[6]
Here, we see beauty emerge from the imaginary
object of the hallucinating model.

What is striking in this work is that in engaging with
the outputs of machinic models, we are drawn into
an alternative aesthetic world—one that operates
outside the familiar frameworks through which we

ordinarily evaluate form, gesture, and grace. This is, to me, profoundly radical and genuinely exhilarating. Davies is choreographing a merger. We are, in this sense, already beyond the question of whether the image or the movement is "AI" or not. The binary has collapsed, the distinction no longer organizes meaning, the glitch has won.

In this post-simulation condition, the concern is not authenticity but permeability. To borrow the language of Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto," the work inhabits a space defined by the erosion of boundaries— the dissolution of separations between human and machine, image and body, choreography and computation.[7] The final question then becomes: what emerges in the wake of this ultimate blurring? Davies's work suggests new modes of relation and perception: a novel grammar of interaction. We encounter the body as camera, the performer as sensor, the choreography as a form of "plot-core,"[8] where narrative, motion, and image fold into one another. These possibilities arise precisely when we abandon the insistence on a fundamental ontological difference between the machinic and the human domains. It is in this reconfiguration—this redistribution of movement, agency, and form—that the work becomes most compelling. An entrancing dance of death and of rebirth.

Notes

1   Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Philip Beitchman, Paul Foss, Paul Patton (Cambridge: Semiotext(e), 1983).
2   Mark Poster (ed.), *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002): 166.
3   By "default fakeness," I mean the epistemological skepticism we develop in a world where everything is presumed to be fake by default, and, thus, reality or truthfulness becomes something that must be actively verified.
4   Édouard Glissant's "opacity" clamors again.
5   Alan M. Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," *Mind*, *New Series* 59, no. 236. (1950): 450.
6   Edwin Denby, "Forms in Motion and in Thought," *Salmagundi*, no. 33/34 (Spring/Summer 1976): 129.
7   Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians*, *Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149-81.
8   Here, I use "plot-core" as my own term for the folding together of narrative, motion, and image. It does not correspond to a literal feature of the fictional group Plot Corp in the artwork.

Biographies

Nina Davies is a Canadian-British artist who considers the present moment by observing dance in popular culture and how it is disseminated, circulated, made, and consumed. Working primarily with video, performance, writing, and installation, her work considers current dance phenomena in relation to the wider socio-technical environments from which it emerges. This includes research into the recent commodification of the dancing body on digital platforms, and rethinking dances of today as traditional dances of the future. Oscillating between the use of fiction and non-fiction, her work helps build new critical frameworks for engaging with dance practices.

Ruby Justice Thelot is a designer, cyberethnographer and artist based in New York. He is a professor of Design and Media Theory at New York University. He is the founder of the award-winning creative research and design studio 13101401 inc.

List of Works

All works by Nina Davies, dimensions variable, and courtesy of the artist unless otherwise specified.

1. *Shimmer* (2026)
   Moving image, hologram fan, steel, aluminium,
   100% unknown fibres, ink, fibre flocking powder

2. *Image Syncer Bag [2]* (2026)
   Transparent handbag, iphone, still images,
   LED lights

3. *Image Syncer Bag [3]* (2026)
   Transparent handbag, 100% unknown fibres,
   iphone, still images, LED lights

4. *Image Syncer Bag [3]* (2026)
   Transparent handbag, 100% unknown fibres,
   iphone, still images, LED lights

5. *Image Syncers* (2025)
   Single channel HD video
   12 mins

6. *Medusas* (2026)
   Moving image, hologram fan, steel, aluminium,
   100% unknown fibres, ink, fibre flocking powder

7. *Wave* (2026)
   Moving image, hologram fan, steel, aluminium,
   100% unknown fibres, ink, fibre flocking powder

8. *Sprung* (2026)
   Moving image, hologram fan, steel, aluminium,
   100% unknown fibres, ink, fibre flocking powder

Floorplan
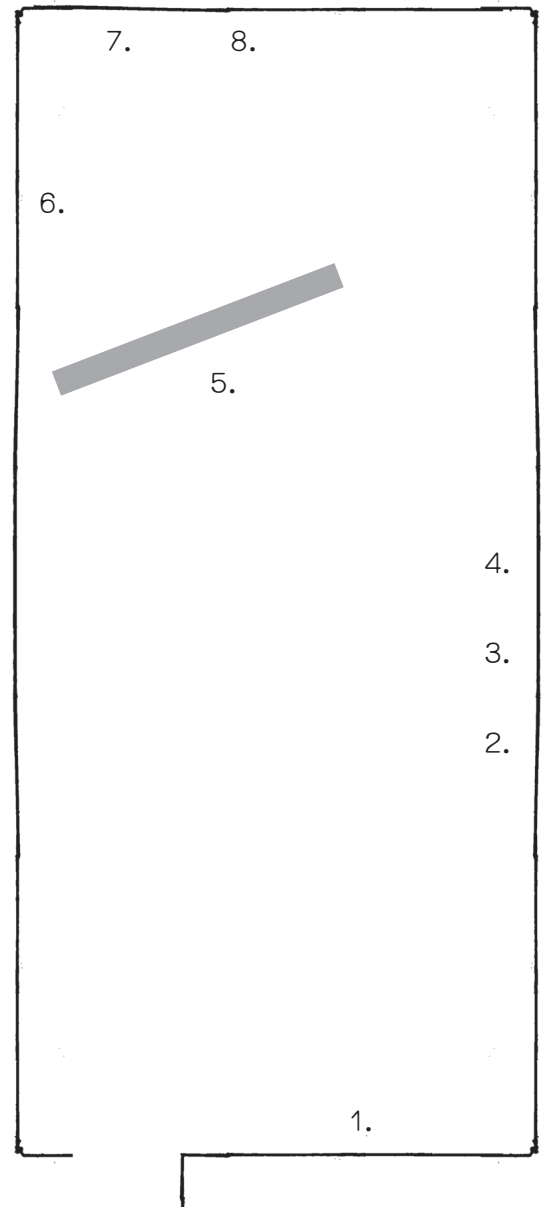
Performers: Dave Biddle, Torien Cafferata, Lisa Christiansen, Sula Castle, Livona Ellis, Jose Funnell, Gracy Gandhi, Kevyn Hu, Alger Liang, Alicia Laing, Sihan Ling, Christina Lovey, Nathaniel Marchand, Rebecca Margolick, Manuel Muñoz, Andy Newman, Duane Nasis, Richard Pye, Simon Roberts, Niloufar Samadi, Gian Singh Sanghera-Warren, Noah Sawchuck, David Varhegyi, Christoph Von Riedemann, Scott Young / Videography: Studio Reverse Magic / Photography: Dan Jackson / Music: FHUR / Make-up artist: Kendahl Labrah Jung / Costumes and props: Kitty Blandy

Project Team

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