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Samson Young 'Pavilion' opens at New Taipei City Art Museum

TAIPEI.- Kiang Malingue shared that Samson Young has been invited as the inaugural artist of the New Taipei City Art Museum's "NTCAM COMMISSION," presenting the new work Pavilion. The exhibition focuses on the inseparable relationship between humans and technology in a media-saturated present marked by the exponential rise of artificial intelligence, asking how technology reshapes our ways of sensing the world and thinking about the self.

The commissioned work looks back to the IBM Pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair, where Charles and Ray Eames produced the multi-screen film THINK. Created at the dawn of computer technology, the work likened computational processes to an expansion of human consciousness, proposing a new way of seeing the world. It revealed both optimism and trust in technology, while reflecting Cold War anxieties about the media. The contradictory emotions stirred by emerging technologies then closely mirror our responses to the rapid advances of AI today.

As a forerunner of "database cinema," THINK broke with linear storytelling, using multiple screens and fragmented images to stage an information architecture. Young extends this formal lineage by drawing cross-temporal comparisons between such multi-screen/multimedia and fragmentary logics, the sixteenth-century cabinet of curiosities (Wunderkammer), and contemporary generative AI—probing how "databases" in different eras entangle time, space, and narrative. In his new commission Pavilion, multi-screen video installations are suspended from the ceiling, so that images generated by AI and sounds intertwine like data fragments; as audiences move and look upward, they experience a media-surround environment.

For the musical dimension, Young adopts the Requiem as a guiding motif, prompted by his interest in the tension between HAL 9000, the sentient computer, and humans in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey. The film famously employs György Ligeti's Lux Aeterna, whose text comes from the Communion chant (Communio) of the Requiem Mass and evokes the threshold of death and the unknown. This imagery also resonates with the film's final sequence, where HAL's glowing "eye" fades as the machine is shut down—leaving it uncertain whether we are witnessing the death of artificial intelligence or the curtain fall for human rationality.

Also on view is Young's 2023 work Variations of 96 chords in space, another piece informed by the concept of "database cinema." Eschewing AI-generated imagery, it instead employs database-like arrangement and algorithmic procedures, combining randomness with human selection. Shown alongside Pavilion, it outlines another mode of human-machine collaboration and together they shape a multi-layered field spanning history, technology, and perception.