

Albright-Knox Northland

FAMILY

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DIFFERENCE  
//MACHINES

Technology & Identity in Contemporary Art

# LEVEL 1

1

5

4

2

3

# YOUR MISSION

Welcome to the special exhibition *Difference Machines: Technology and Identity in Contemporary Art*! You have been chosen to design a machine to help others in our communities. Our plan is to use our imaginations to create this machine.

To help our imaginations soar, we are going to create a character with some special skills that will help you on your mission—like one does in a video game! We'll go through levels to build your unique character, your unique world, and your unique skillset. Then, when you're ready, you'll be able to design an invention to share with us!

## LEVEL 1:

YOUR MISSION  
Entrance

## LEVEL 2:

BUILD YOUR CHARACTER  
Saya Woolfalk

## LEVEL 3:

CREATE YOUR WORLD  
Skawennati

## LEVEL 4:

BUILD YOUR SKILLSET:  
COMMUNICATION  
Stephanie Dinkins

## LEVEL 5:

PUZZLE TIME  
Joiri Minaya

## FINAL LEVEL

COMPLETE THE MISSION

First, let's break down the words in this title.

**What is difference?** A difference is something that makes two things or people not the same. Can you think of something that makes you different from someone else and makes you feel special? Why do you think it might be important for people to celebrate their differences?

**What is identity?** It is the way we define who or what we are. It can include things that make us unique, like our DNA, and also things that we share with other groups of people, like where we grew up. The artists in this exhibition mention their race, ethnicity, gender, and/or dis/ability when talking about their identity. If you were to make a piece of art about your identity, what is something you would want to share about yourself?

**What is technology?** Technology uses science to invent things that are supposed to make our lives better, like medicines, bridges, or the internet. Can you think of some other technologies that you use?

**What is a machine?** A machine is a kind of technology that makes something we want to do easier, like buses or cars, which make it easier to get places. Can you think of a machine that makes your life easier?


Morehshin Allahyari (Iranian-Kurdish, born 1985). *Material Speculation: Isis*, 2015–16. Four 3-D printed plastic sculptures with embedded portable data-storage devices.

The artists in this exhibition make art by using contemporary machines like TVs, computers, and 3-D printers! They're interested in how those machines help us understand our differences. Their artworks show us that we can use technology in ways that are positive. For example, a group of people who share an identity can use the internet to connect with each other and share their history with other people. But sometimes, technology is used in ways that are not constructive, like when one group of people uses the internet to spread stereotypes about another group. For today, let's think of a way technology can help!

# LEVEL 2



# BUILD YOUR CHARACTER

**LOOK:** Find the videos by Saya Woolfalk. What is the first thing you notice? Why do you think that caught your eye? Take in all the details the artist is sharing with you: the colors, the objects, and the characters. How would you describe the figures you see?

Woolfalk has created the storyworld of the Empathics, a fictional race of highly technological people whose cells are fused with the cells of animals and plants. The Empathics believe that their job is to help the world be a better place by guiding people to have **empathy** for each other.

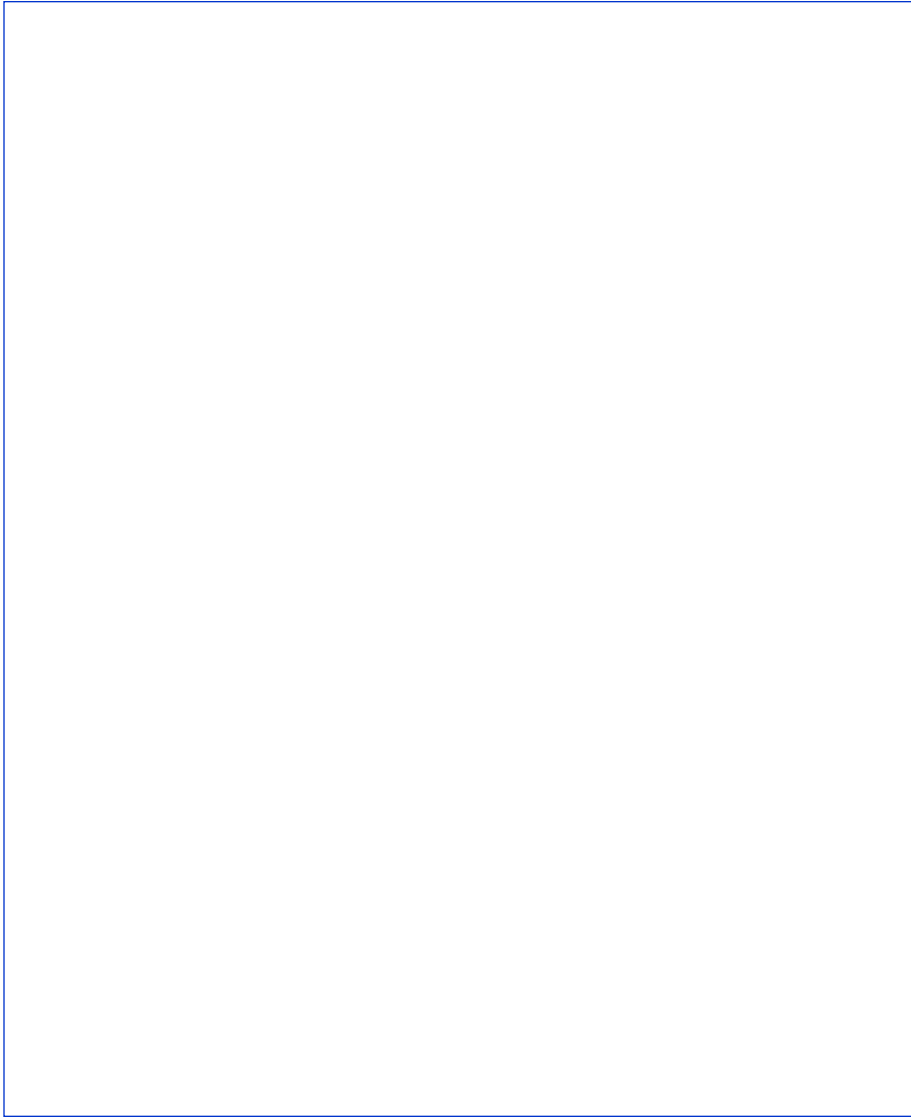
**IMAGINE:** Imagine yourself inside this work of art. Would you want to talk to the people you see? What would you say?

**Empathy** is understanding how someone else is feeling because you have been in a similar situation or felt that way before. If you have ever felt sad or excited because your friend was sad or excited about something, you have felt empathy!

(Left) Detail of Saya Woolfalk (American, born Japan, 1979). *Landscape of Anticipation 2.0*, 2021. Installation with nine digital videos (color, sound) displayed on monitors and vinyl stickers.

Draw a character for your mission today. What do they look like? Do they fuse together with something from nature, like a plant or an animal? What are they wearing?

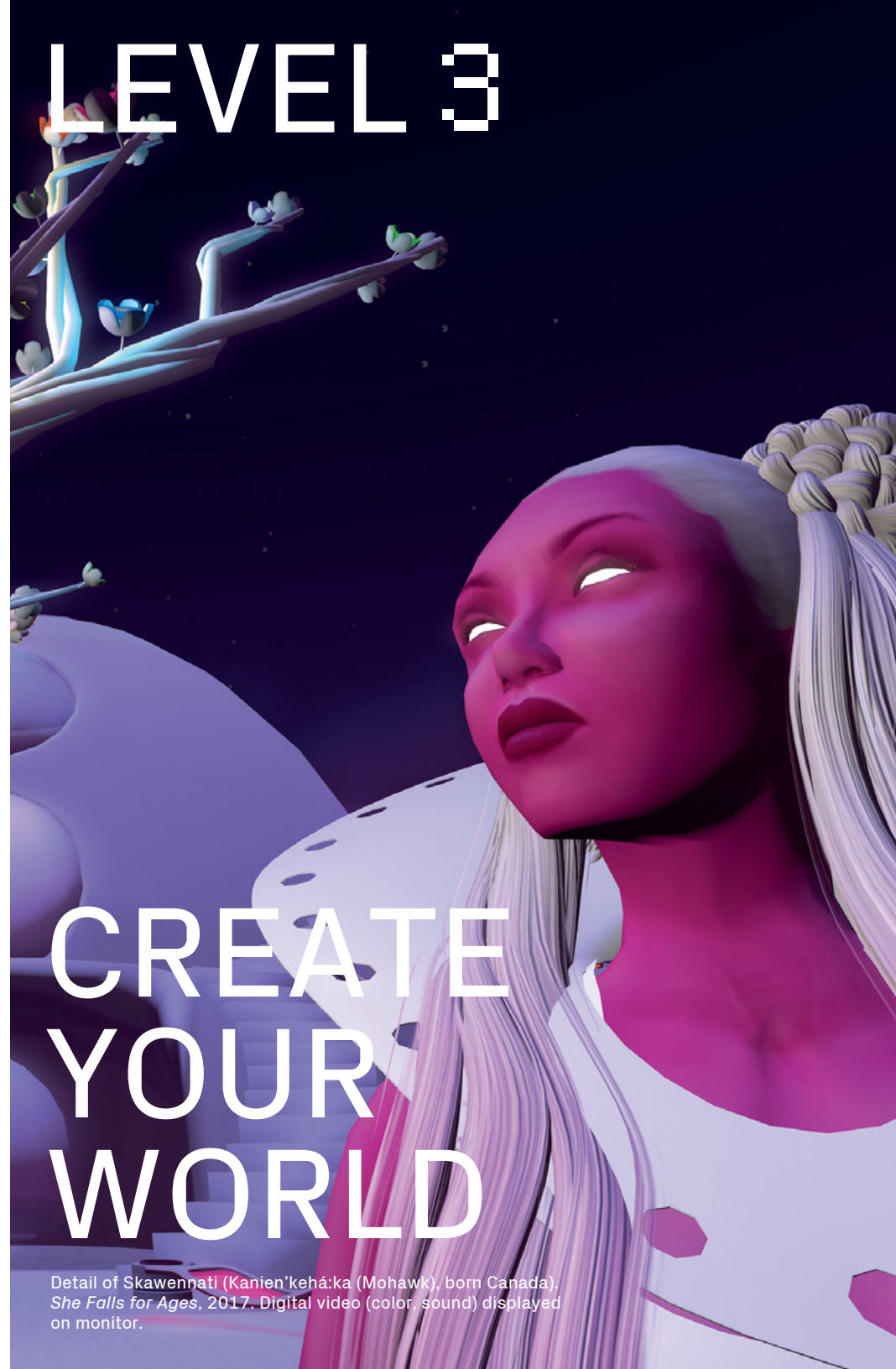


**BONUS POINT QUESTION:**

Why might people want to show empathy to each other?

LEVEL 2

# LEVEL 3



# CREATE YOUR WORLD

Detail of Skawennati (Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), born Canada), *She Falls for Ages*, 2017. Digital video (color, sound) displayed on monitor.

**LOOK:** Take a few minutes to watch *She Falls for Ages*. How would you describe the mood of this video? What do you notice about the world these characters live in? Would you want to visit this place? Why or why not?

Skawennati records machinima videos using the online game Second Life. Machinima, or “machine” + “cinema,” is an **animation** made in a virtual world, such as a video game. *She Falls for Ages* retells the **Haudenosaunee** creation story, or story of how the earth was born. Skawennati reimagines the Sky World as a futuristic, utopian space and the Sky Woman, who becomes Mother Nature, as a brave astronaut and world-builder. Why do you think Skawennati might have wanted to make the video using characters in Second Life, instead of live actors?

Think about the character you just drew. Imagine what is around them. Are they inside or outside, or maybe up in space? Are they surrounded by things from nature or from your imagination, like dragons and unicorns? Go ahead and draw a few things in your character’s unique world.



**Animation** is the art and science of making pictures, or images, appear to move like they do in cartoons and movies.

**Haudenosaunee** (hoe-dee-no-SHOW-nee) means “people who build a house.” The name refers to an alliance among six Native American nations who are also known as the Iroquois Confederacy.

**BONUS POINT QUESTION:**

Why is it important to learn stories from different cultures all over the world?

# LEVEL 4



# BUILD YOUR SKILLSET: COMMUNICATION

Next, let's build our communication skills (how we connect with others through talking, listening, writing, and even moving our bodies).

**LOOK:** Watch artist Stephanie Dinkins and Bina48 have a conversation. Bina48 is one of the world's most advanced social robots! Her face is based on the face of a real woman named Bina Rothblatt. When Bina48 is asked a question, a computer program uses the real Bina's recorded memories to come up with answers. Listen closely to what Bina48 says. Do you like Bina48's responses? Do they seem natural?

Listen to the questions that Dinkins asks Bina48. What are the questions about? Why do you think she is asking them? What would you want to ask Bina48?

By talking to Bina48, Stephanie Dinkins explores how and why we build robots. Like Bina48, most robots and "virtual assistants" like Siri and Alexa use women's faces and voices. Why do you think that is? If you could be the voice of a robot, would you want to be?

**BONUS POINT QUESTION:**

Do you think you could be friends with a robot? Why or why not?

(Left) Stephanie Dinkins (American, born 1964). *Conversations with Bina48: 7, 6, 5, 2, 2014—ongoing*. Four digital videos (color, sound) displayed on monitors.

# LEVEL 5



# PUZZLE TIME

Detail of Joiri Minaya (Dominican–United Statesian, born 1990). #dominicanwomengoogresearch, 2016. Digital prints on Sintra with fabric.

**MOVE:** Carefully move around the work of art by Joiri Minaya. Practice your stealth moves by being aware of your surroundings, making sure to look but not touch.

A few years ago, Joiri Minaya did a Google search for images of “Dominican Women,” and most of the results were of women in bikinis. Minaya is also a Dominican woman. Do you think she liked those results? Why or why not?

To help others notice what these results showed, she used her computer to cut up the images into parts of the body and then printed each body part so that it was life-size. She hangs these parts to create a kind of maze. How does this maze of parts make you feel?

Notice that the back side of every body part is covered in a “tropical print” fabric. Why do you think she might have made them this way? If you chose a piece of cloth to represent you, what patterns and colors would it have?

Now it’s time to do your own search:

**SEARCH:**

Google  
art  
machine  
computer  
search  
image

X	J	B	V	X	B	Y	I	E	J	D	A	X	J
B	T	Q	G	X	B	I	T	H	I	Y	A	K	C
W	F	I	X	E	L	T	E	B	X	X	R	K	O
R	E	J	O	B	C	G	A	T	E	I	T	R	M
N	Y	Z	P	A	G	E	I	V	S	V	R	U	P
V	O	J	E	O	G	Z	C	P	J	A	E	B	U
F	X	P	L	E	O	L	A	O	N	S	K	T	T
H	G	N	O	L	O	B	Y	I	F	Q	B	H	E
M	G	Z	O	Y	G	B	J	L	U	S	X	X	R
I	A	Z	S	C	L	C	S	T	Z	T	G	H	M
M	C	C	H	Z	E	Y	P	B	O	E	M	I	T
A	P	N	H	P	U	L	K	R	S	C	S	J	V
G	J	K	P	I	Y	S	E	A	R	C	H	I	J
E	N	B	Z	M	N	K	P	X	E	Z	Z	B	H
M	O	R	C	X	G	E	V	D	U	N	F	F	U



**BONUS POINT QUESTION:** What if you searched for images of something on the internet and only one type of image came up? Would that change the way that you saw it? Why or why not?

**DOUBLE BONUS POINT QUESTION:** There is another artist in this exhibition who also uses photographs, but not ones found online. He takes photos of the regular details of his daily life, including the meals that he eats or the receipts from things that he buys. Once you find it, list the artist's name and the title below.

Hasan Elahi (American, born Bangladesh, 1972). *Thousand Little Brothers*, 2014. Pigment print on canvas.

X	J	B	V	X	B	Y	I	E	J	D	A	X	J
B	T	Q	G	X	B	I	T	H	I	Y	A	K	C
W	F	I	X	E	L	T	E	B	X	X	R	K	O
R	E	J	O	B	C	G	A	T	E	I	T	R	M
N	Y	Z	P	A	G	E	I	V	S	V	R	U	P
V	O	J	E	O	G	Z	C	P	J	A	E	B	U
F	X	P	L	E	O	L	A	O	N	S	K	T	T
H	G	N	O	L	O	B	Y	I	F	Q	B	H	E
M	G	Z	O	Y	G	B	J	L	U	S	X	X	R
I	A	Z	S	C	L	C	S	T	Z	T	G	H	M
M	C	C	H	Z	E	Y	P	B	O	E	M	I	T
A	P	N	H	P	U	L	K	R	S	C	S	J	V
G	J	K	P	I	Y	S	E	A	R	C	H	I	J
E	N	B	Z	M	N	K	P	X	E	Z	Z	B	H
M	O	R	C	X	G	E	V	D	U	N	F	F	U


LEVEL 5

# FINAL LEVEL

# COMPLETE YOUR MISSION

Congrats! You've made it to the final level. Together, we have explored works of art that use machines and technology—like the internet, computers, televisions, and robots! These works have made us think in new ways about how we use technology.

**THINK:** What problems do you see in your community? What machine might help solve these issues? Hopefully your character is ready to invent a new machine or use one that is already built in a new way. Draw your design here:



Share your answers with us on social media! #DifferenceMachines

**OPTIONAL ACTIVITY AT HOME:** Make your design into a 3-D sculpture using found objects such as paper, cardboard, string, bottles, or plastic containers.

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