

THE PUBLIC.

Shakespeare Machine Site-Specific Installation by Ben Rubin

"For me, the *Shakespeare Machine* is a kind of supercollider, where the particles to be accelerated and smashed together are scenes, lines, and phrases from Shakespeare's play. I hope that these collisions will ignite traces of the incandescent energy, wit, and passion that existed at the moment of these plays' creation." – Ben Rubin

Artist Ben Rubin has been commissioned by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs to create a large-scale multimedia sculpture, *Shakespeare Machine*, for The Public's revitalized lobby. Suspended from the ceiling and serving as the space's chandelier, the work features 37 LED display screens on which fragments of Shakespeare's plays appear and dance, creating an unfolding kaleidoscope of language in motion. The machine selects and organizes these fragments according to a series of different logical systems, each using a combination of grammatical, contextual, rhythmic, and/or semantic attributes of Shakespeare's language to generate new text-motion sequences. The artwork's program ensures that the arrangement of the text at any given instant is unique, and will never be repeated.

The installation is part of New York City's Percent for Art initiative, which designates one percent of construction project budgets that receive city funding to site-specific artworks.

Ben Rubin (b. 1964, Boston, Massachusetts) is a media artist based in New York City. His work is in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago; the San Jose Museum of Art; and the Science Museum, London, and has been exhibited at the Whitney Museum in New York, the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid, the Foundation Cartier pour l'art contemporain in Paris, and the ZKM Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe. Rubin has created large-scale public artworks for the *New York Times*, the city of San Jose, the Minneapolis Public Library, the University of Texas at Austin, and the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia.

The geometric concept and mechanical details of the piece were designed in collaboration with architect Michele Gorman.

Rubin developed the algorithms that select and animate the text together with his longtime collaborator, statistician Mark Hansen.

Data artist Jer Thorp and designer/programmer Ian Ardouin-Fumat also contributed to the software design. Mechanical engineering support was generously provided by Guy Nordenson and Associates. The piece was engineered and fabricated in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, by Perfection Electricks and Parallel Development Ltd.

James Shapiro, Stephen Greenblatt, Barry Edelstein, and Oskar Eustis provided critical guidance and advice in navigating Shakespeare's texts.