

# ARTFORUM

Hershman Leeson, Lynn and Canada Choate, “Lynn Hershman Leeson on Her Work for the Venice Biennale,”  
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## LYNN HERSHMAN LEESON ON HER WORK FOR THE VENICE BIENNALE

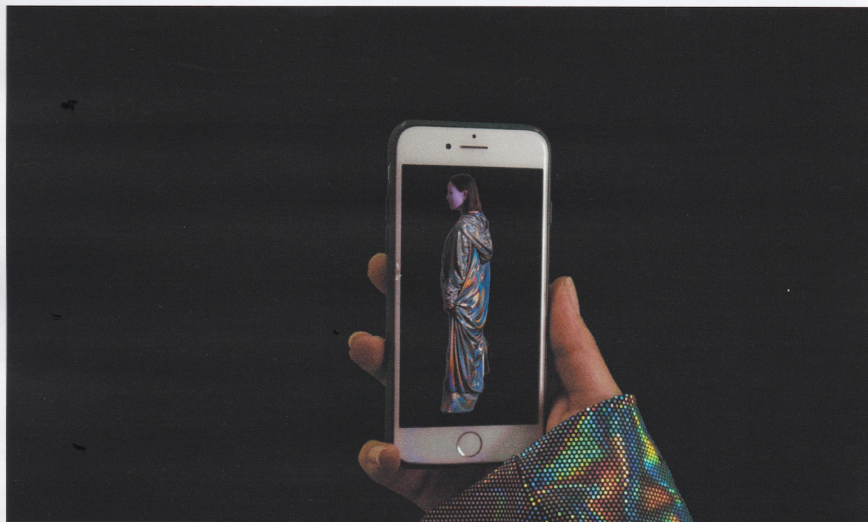
**THE TERM CYBORG** turned sixty in 2020. I realized this just last year, so my project, *Logic Paralyzes the Heart*, is about a sixty-one-year-old cyborg, played by the actress and filmmaker Joan Chen, who is reconsidering the trajectory of her life. She was made by NASA, and since her birth robotic devices have populated the world. The difference is that new technologies of surveillance are directed not at an enemy *out there* but at people in our own country. The cyborg goes on a retreat, which inspires her to meet her human avatar and explain what she’s discovered. She wants to find ways she can be more human. The film will be installed in a room wallpapered with hundreds of AI-generated faces of people who don’t exist.

I don’t think I’d be doing this work if I lived somewhere else. In Los Angeles, everyone talks about scripts; but in the Bay Area, everyone talks about code. You either find out what’s being invented or start wondering why something hasn’t been. I think

the Bay Area is driving the whole world right now . . . minus the art world.

*Logic Paralyzes the Heart* deals with existence in a world where predictions are being made for us. We need to be aware of what’s happening, like the big-data software company Palantir partnering with Amazon, which partners with ICE [US Immigration and Customs Enforcement]. I don’t think people understand the degree to which our options are being taken over. Nevertheless, *Logic* is a positive piece. It talks about our dreaded dilemmas, but it reminds us that other futures are possible: We have, as a species, changed before. We need to figure out what we can do to live and cohabit. Humans and cyborgs are partners—one doesn’t have to be a master and the other the slave. I wanted the film to end with the human avatar teaching the cyborg how to dream. It’s a kind of plea for survival.

—As told to Canada Choate



Lynn Hershman Leeson, *Logic Paralyzes the Heart*, 2022, 4K video, 13 minutes 53 seconds. Joan Chen (Cyborg 1) dressed by Nina Hollein.