Simone Jones:

# *HOW MEDIA COUNT*

September 8, 2023–
October 14, 2023

Centre for Culture
and Technology,
University of Toronto

The Centre for Culture and Technology is delighted to present *How Media Count*, a solo exhibition by Simone Jones. Produced as part of the Centre's second annual Artist-in-Residence Program, this project responds to the Centre's 2023–2024 programming theme of the same name, which engages questions of quantification, datafication, numbering, and counting in media.

In *How Media Count*, Jones assembles a collection of works which probe "counting media" from historical, material, and metaphysical perspectives. Through photography, video, performance, printmaking, and sculpture, Jones thinks through and with the paradoxes that arise when we attempt to reconcile numerical abstraction with embodied experience.

Two physical prompts provide entry to this inquiry: the surface plate and the meter bar. Jones uses these to examine the development of precision and standardization in the language and history of machining. The surface plate is a flat plane which serves as the primary horizontal reference within machine practice. All other precision machine tools are created from the surface plate, a fundamental baseline for dimensional measurement. The "Meter Bar #27," meanwhile, was the US standard of all length measurement until its replacement with a wavelength in 1960. The "Meter Bar #27" could not have been fabricated without the invention of the surface plate. It is also a material manifestation of an abstract quantity.

*How Media Count* also presents some of the key physical substances that underpin the historical and political evolution of counting media —magnetic cores, quartz crystal, and silicon. These materials are both integral and usually invisible within our contemporary digital environment.

Throughout the exhibition, time and space emerge as integral players in our need to quantify experience. As such, Jones positions counting at the intersection of perception, memory, and abstraction.

***Notes on the works***

*Timation* is a re-enactment of an experiment conducted by the American physicist Roger Easton in 1973. Imagine observing two synchronous clocks. One clock is stationary and the other is moving away from the position of the fixed clock. As the distance between the two clocks increases, so too does the perceived discrepancy between their time keeping. The experiment established the principles of clock-difference navigation, also known as "timation", and is regarded as the origin of today's contemporary Global Positioning System (GPS).

*Zeno's Jump* is based on Zeno's Dichotomy Paradox: before anything can move from point A to point B, it must travel half the distance. The paradox argues that motion is impossible because you will never arrive at point B since any movement forward may be divided into smaller distances. As David Foster Wallace points out in his book *Everything and More*, Zeno's paradox implies a correspondence between an abstract mathematical entity and actual physical space—something that "the abstract symbolism and schemata of pure math are designed to avoid."[1] However, the "relation between a mathematical entity (e.g. a series, a geometric point) and actual physical space is also the relation of the discrete to the continuous.... Since what the Dichotomy tries to do is break a continuous physical process down into an infinite series of discrete steps, it can be

seen as history's first-ever attempt to represent continuity mathematically."[2]

*Chasing Zero* is a durational (and ongoing) work whereby the Joseph Whitworth "three plate method" is used to obtain flatness on the surface of three ductile cast iron discs. Flatness is foundational to machining and is integral to the origins of precision manufacturing—it is the "ground zero" of machine practice. Created over the period of the residency, the discs transform from industrial objects into objects of contemplation: can "zero" be obtained? This is an instance where an abstract concept, "zero", is set into conversation with a physical entity. The sound of the plates rubbing together highlights the durational and process driven nature of the work.

*Standard* is a replica of the "Meter Bar #27." In 1873, the "Meter Bar #27" became the US reference standard for all length measurements.[3] The replica is in conversation with a sculpture of a ruler that has had its markings removed. This relationship between the "standard" length of the meter and an everyday object of measurement is intended to illuminate the pervasive systems that underpin our interactions with the physical world while at the same time highlighting the arbitrary nature of the systems themselves.

The *Forrester Series* depicts the notebooks of J. W. Forrester (specifically the notes that refer to his invention of magnetic core memory). First used in the Whirlwind computer, magnetic core memory was integral to the establishment of radar technology used in early warning air defense systems. Forrester's notebooks have been annotated to highlight the many individuals who contributed to its development. Also noted is "Joe-1," the first successful atomic bomb detonated by the Soviet Union. This event created the sense of urgency that spurred the development of Whirlwind and led to the creation of real-time, digital computing.

*Joe-1* is a double-sided print that positions the Soviet Union's detonation of its first atomic bomb "Joe-1." This event heralded the development of real-time computing in the United States. The image of Joe-1 is sandwiched between a screen print of a Herman Hollerith (founder of IBM) punch card and a screen print of a closeup of J. W. Forrester's (founder of digital computing) magnetic core memory.

*Now* is a collaboration between Simone Jones and mathematician Ramtin Loftabadi. The screen print illustrates an email conversation between Jones and Loftabadi. Jones' prompt "Now to the power of n" is shown next to Loftabadi's response to her prompt. A clock that continually moves forward runs beside the screen print.

*Magnetic Core Memory* is a print that magnifies this tiny storage media (circa 1950s). *Approaching the Invisible* juxtaposes three objects: the magnetic core memory, Hitaachi EPROM (circa 1970s), and a cube of pure silicon. The prompt uses materiality and scale to reflect upon the prediction of Moore's Law.

[1] David Foster Wallace, *Everything and More: A Compact History of ∞* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2003), 70.
[2] Wallace, 71.
[3] "Meter Bar 27," NIST.gov, https://www.nist.gov/image/meter27jpg (retrieved April 13, 2023).

***Acknowledgments***
Simone Jones would like to thank the following for their support:

OCAD University
Josh Avery
Eric Steenbergen
Gerald Grison
Lauren Porter
Rebecca Hollett
Tredegar Kennedy
Nick Hooper
Sandra Rechico
Canada Council for the Arts
The Ontario Arts Council and the Government of Ontario

The Centre for Culture and Technology thanks:

Faculty of Information Business Office
Talia Golland
Patty Facy
Camille Inston
Matthew Nish-Lapidus
Miles Rufelds