

MODERNISM

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contact: jonathonkeats@gmail.com

NEW WEARABLE TECHNOLOGIES BIOCHEMICALLY OPTIMIZE WEARERS' PERSONALITIES

Fashion-Forward 'Superego Suits' Developed By Jonathon Keats At The LACMA Art + Technology Lab Will Debut In San Francisco This March

February 27, 2017 – Applying cutting-edge neuroscience to millennia of costume history, a multidisciplinary research initiative has achieved simultaneous breakthroughs in both fields, pioneering the next generation of wearable technology. Building on research from laboratories at Harvard and Florida State University, experimental philosopher Jonathon Keats will introduce 'Superego Suits' to the public in San Francisco next month.

Fully modular and customizable to all body types, Superego Suits boast multiple features to alter self-perception, augmenting wearers' personalities for work and social life. "Today's wearables can supplement wearers' memories and knowledge and interactivity by connecting them to the internet," says Mr. Keats. "But psychologically you still remain your same old self. Glassholes will be Glassholes."

Superego Suits get to the root of the problem by altering biochemistry and brain/body communication. They can make wearers more confident and enchanting, and even connect with other Superego Suits to manage interpersonal relationships.

Four major innovations will be showcased at San Francisco's Modernism Gallery, where prototypes will be on view together with fashion photography by Elena Dorfman, featuring the Wilhelmina International model Anna Sophia Moltke. Mr. Keats has engineered sunglasses with irises designed to open and close in time with the wearer's breathing – augmenting her presence by increasing awareness of her internal state – a phenomenon known in neuroscience as interoception. He's also developed bracelets that can position the wearer in a 'power pose', causing the release of testosterone, a hormone associated with self-assurance. Telescopic rings are engineered to extend the wearer's reach, mentally enlarging the sense of personal influence by modifying her body schema. And mechanical heels dynamically adjust the wearer's stature to exceed the height of anyone she encounters.

"By putting the wearer in superhuman control of her bodily state, my elevator shoes enhance her belief in her own free will," Mr. Keats explains. "And that's not all. The opposite effect can also be achieved, catastrophically undermining certainty."

In fact, all of the psychological phenomena are reversible, an essential quality of Superego Suits, which are designed to make personality completely adjustable. For instance, future versions of his power pose bracelets will be able to measure blood hormone levels, activating positive or negative feedback loops in which confidence is dynamically amplified or restrained.

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"Through these inventions, we may be able to become more extreme versions of ourselves and also to selectively try on other people's personae," notes Mr. Keats. "Technology may further entrench egotism or facilitate empathy."

The long-term impact of such interventions is far from certain, and the risks are uncharted, but Mr. Keats argues that the same can be said about iPhones and Fitbits. "These commonplace devices make us cyborgs without invasive surgery," he observes. "And they update our capabilities with every software upgrade, barely attracting our notice."

Nevertheless, the prevalence of wearables guarantees a robust market for Superego Suits. In addition to his work at the forefront of fashion, Mr. Keats has consulted with SpaceX engineers about adapting his neuroscientific couture for astronauts to wear on long-term space missions. These IVA spacesuits would allow ground control to coordinate crew members' character traits, fostering cooperation in close quarters.

"At their best, Superego Suits can help to make us our best selves," says Mr. Keats. "The challenge is that it forces us to ask who and what we want to be – both individually and as a species."

Superego Suits will be unveiled on Thursday, March 16th from 5:30 to 8:00 at Modernism Gallery, 724 Ellis St., San Francisco, CA. Viewings will be available by appointment through April. Research and development has been generously funded by a grant from the Art + Technology Lab at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

More information: www.modernisminc.com/exhibitions/Jonathon_KEATS--The_New_Look_of_Neuroscience/

Acclaimed as a "poet of ideas" by The New Yorker and a "multimedia philosopher-prophet" by The Atlantic, Jonathon Keats is an artist, writer and experimental philosopher based in San Francisco and Northern Italy. His conceptually-driven interdisciplinary projects explore all aspects of society through science and technology. In recent years, he has installed a camera with a thousand-year-long exposure – documenting the long-term effects of climate change – at Arizona State University; opened a photosynthetic restaurant serving gourmet sunlight to plants at the Crocker Art Museum; exhibited extraterrestrial abstract artwork decoded from Arecibo Observatory radiotelescope data at the Judah L. Magnes Museum; applied quantum mechanics to banking – coaxing money into a quantum superposition to be shared by everyone – at Rockefeller Center; and attempted to genetically engineer God in collaboration with scientists at the UC Berkeley. Exhibited internationally, Keats's projects have been documented by PBS, Reuters, and the BBC World Service, garnering favorable attention in periodicals ranging from Science to Flash Art to The Economist. In recent years, he has lectured at institutions including UC Berkeley, Stanford University and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), which recently awarded him a 2015-16 Art + Technology Lab Grant. His latest book, You Belong to the Universe: Buckminster Fuller and the Future has recently been published by Oxford University Press, which also published his previous book, Forged: Why Fakes Are the Great Art of Our Age. He is represented by Modernism Gallery in San Francisco.