



# Rachel Ara

Rachel Ara is a conceptual and data artist who explores the relationships between gender, technology and systems of power.

*This Much I'm Worth (The self-evaluating artwork)* (2017) states its function clearly and with humour: it is an artwork that presents its own fluctuating value. The work was engineered and programmed by Ara, and she has collaborated with a female glassblower, Julia Bickerstaff, to manufacture its sets of seven large red neon numerals. Created on a monumental scale at over four metres in width, it is a comment on the excessive importance placed on market value and questions the parameters that are established to calculate this.

Ara has programmed the work taking into account several deliberate factors including: age, gender, sexuality, race using data mining algorithms called 'the endorsers' and by calculating social media presence - if you tweet about the work it reacts instantly. It also assesses the numbers of gallery visitors looking at the piece through the use of web cameras.

The aesthetics of the neons refer to Nixie tubes or cold-cathode tubes used in early calculators and numerical displays, but also the bright lights of sex-shop signs. All the physical components of the work are clearly visible: from the 83 neons, their metal cages ('the keepers'), multiple cables, IP cameras, elements of server-room computer equipment that host the electronics, to the brackets that hold the weight of the piece.

Ara has a background in programming and cabinet making. She brings these skills to explore the possibilities of technology, making complex works that interrogate their own function and question technological binaries. In 2016 she was awarded the Aesthetica Art Prize for a prototype of the piece.

E.B.

'This Much I'm Worth  
(The self-evaluating artwork)  
*is part of a wider body  
of work that addresses  
feminist issues, conspiracies  
of silence and misinformation.  
(It) has been made all the  
more complex by my own  
ambition to work with  
only women experts in  
fields dominated by men.'*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rachel Ara, 'The Making of a Digital Masterpiece', 2017: [www.2ra.co/tmiwfull.html](http://www.2ra.co/tmiwfull.html)

This page and following spread:  
*This Much I'm Worth (The self-evaluating artwork)*, 2017  
83 pieces of neon, recycled server room equipment, electronics,  
computers, IP cameras, programming, 420 × 160 × 90 cm



THE 5th FLOOR

