

5. Dylan Brenneis: Development As Dance

Development As Dance is an art installation created by Dylan Brenneis in 2026. It is composed of a large tree limb with three branches connected to various electronic elements, including a motion sensing device and motor.

The slender limb of a tree with three branches is displayed vertically, its base secured to the centre of a tapered plinth. The plinth is a six-sided, geometric frame with navy blue cotton fabric stretched over it. The tree limb is mounted upright by its thickest end, which is about the size of a wrist. And a tall black metal pole is mounted behind the tree limb. Three protruding metal rods near the top of the pole provide structural support for the tree branches through three hanging bungee cords which connect to the ends of each branch.

The tree limb is from a Maple tree. Its bark has been stripped off, leaving it pale and smooth, glistening as if polished with oil. The branches are mostly bare, retaining only a few delicate twigs. Each branch features a section where the artist has created a joint by cutting the branch in two and then reattaching them together with flexible wire and copper mesh. These wounds are emphasized on either end by strips of the cotton blue fabric, fastened with oblong wood buttons.

One long blue fabric tube winds from the base of the sculpture up the metal pole and all the way up to the ceiling. It powers a motion sensing device placed directly above a blue sticker on the floor, located approximately three feet in front of the sculpture. This six-sided sticker is about three feet wide by three feet in length. And it features a white graphic of the tree limb in its centre, framed by two blue arrows pointing outwards, one to the tree limb's left and the other to its right.

This sticker communicates where a visitor can place their body if they want to interact with the sculpture. Sway from side to side and the tree limb shifts left and then right from its base, its branches bending at their joints, twigs jiggling. Sometimes the sculpture's movements are quick or responsive, and at others, hesitant or delayed. A small movement of the head or arm may translate once, intermittently, or not at all. At times, the tree branches' shuddering may continue long after you exit the motion sensor's range.

About the artwork and artist:

Development As Dance explores the development of assistive technology as a series of creative encounters between the people who use it, the people who produce it, and the technology itself. As partners within a dance of development, their movements might be composed or conversational, interpretive or choreographed, synchronized or out of step.

Visitors can enter into this dance by placing their body in front of a sculpture and making the first move. Using motion sensing technology, the sculpture will respond in kind, as it attempts to understand and translate a visitor's gestures.

Lag, misinterpretations, and the slow accumulation of drift may lead to some disharmony between dance partners. In this way, the work tends to both the hopeful intentions of developing and using assistive technologies as well as their potential challenges and limitations.

Dylan Brenneis is an interdisciplinary artist with a research-creation practice that explores relationships between humans and the machines they create. Through machine building, Dylan's artworks explore the negotiation and blurring of the human-machine boundary. His work draws on experiences as a Senior Research Engineer at Google DeepMind and with developing internationally adopted open-source robots for prosthesis control research at the BLINC Lab.

The next artwork is also on this wall, to the right of the sculpture.