

FELIX PENG: **BIG BIRD IS WATCHING YOU**

JANUARY – AUGUST 2026



Have you ever been **racially profiled**? Well, there's no better time than now.

Step up to **Big Bird**. Press the **red button**. Smile, or don't; the camera inside its eye doesn't care. In roughly 30 seconds, Big Bird will announce your race, your gender, your age, your religion, your class, and your education, and then hand you a **LEADERSHIP INDEX**.

The Index might be negative pi. It might be aleph-null. It might be the square root of negative seven, or zero divided by zero, or $e^{i\pi} + 1$. Does higher mean better? Does irrational mean more? Does imaginary carry more weight? The score is a number, or a symbol, or the shape of a number. What it means is up to you.

Somewhere inside the puppet, a machine did something. It may have measured your face, weighed your demographics, ignored all of it, or cared more about the color of your shirt than any of the above. You will not be told which.

You will stand there wondering whether a taller person would have scored higher. Whether someone **whiter**, or **darker**, or **younger**, or **better-dressed** would have gotten a nicer number. You will project, onto a yellow felt puppet, every suspicion you have ever had about the machines that sort human beings for a living.

Those machines, by the way, are not hypothetical. **Hiring platforms** rank résumés by proxy. **Predictive-policing** systems flag neighborhoods. **Credit models** decide who gets a mortgage. **Social feeds** choose what you see. You already live inside a thousand of these quiet verdicts, mostly without noticing, usually without appeal.

Named after the **Big Brother** of Orwell's *1984*: surveillance dressed in a children's costume. Built in conversation with Taryn Simon's *Kleroterion*, whose ancient Athenian randomness argued that fairness meant refusing to choose. Big Bird turns the lens inward. The next time an algorithm hands you a number, a rank, a risk score, a feed, try asking Big Bird's question back at it: **what did it actually do, and why should you believe it?**

HOW TO BE JUDGED

1. Stand where Big Bird can see you. Its eye is the camera.
2. Press the big **red button** on the podium.
3. Stay in frame until the screen says "**Capturing subject...**" is done. After that, move around all you want.
4. Listen.



SCAN

90-sec walkthrough of
the exhibit