

Digital Baroque: History Meets Algorithm, a future-looking exhibition that channels history, opens 31 January- 8 February, 2022 on the newly launched 4ART NFT+ marketplace.

4ARTechnologies, a pioneer in art digitization and security is proud to launch their inaugural exhibition, **Digital Baroque: History Meets Algorithm**, bringing together 11 individual artists and 3 collectives. A total of 14 physical artworks ranging from data sculpture, AR wallpaper, screen painting and ink drawing to physical prints and 3D printed sculptures will each be matched by a unique NFT in this exhibition, minted on the Palm Network, an Ethereum side chain that is over 99% more energy-efficient than Proof of Work-based blockchain networks. Inspired by Timothy Murray's groundbreaking book, *Digital Baroque: New Media and Cinematic Folds*, the exhibition provides a Baroque lens on new digital technologies, asking the question: how would Baroque influence the virtual space?

The Baroque period of art history (17th—18th century) was known for its ornate, eclectic and philosophical flair. It inspired Gilles Deleuze's concept of the Fold, which maps out a Baroque characteristic of nonlinearity, transformation and augmentation. The Fold can also be considered a feature of our contemporary condition in a world of digital plenty and instability. Playing out a tension between being and becoming, dissolution and unity, the works showcased as part of this exhibition are endlessly folding and unfurling, referencing both the past and the future in mythology, music and movement.

Ahmed Elgammal, who is a US-based computer scientist and pioneer in AI art, is showcasing a video from the series *Saskia Reimagined* that reinterprets a glittering portrait of Rembrandt's wife Saskia van Uylenburgh, in commemoration of her short life (she died at the age of 29). The work activates her face beneath moving gems, the AI-generated petals and sapphires providing an opulent texture to the work in a play of concealing and revealing, with the corresponding print capturing her face uncovered. The notion of the bejeweled art object takes on a deconstructed 3D form in Jonathan Monaghan's *Memento Eternal 01*, where he depicts

the Fabergé egg — except the jewels are replaced with USB ports, furniture parts and other miscellaneous everyday items. The egg opens to uncover a plush velvet bust with gold buttons, which is also available as a 3D printed sculpture, and has a distinctly retro-futuristic feel.

There are several works that depict historical figures. A VR handmade painting, *Troppo Vero*, positions Pope Innocent X's 17th-century portrait by Spanish painter Diego Velázquez suspended in a revolving cube made of amber glass. Referencing both Baroque painting and cryptocurrency, this work by Madrid-based Nacho Frades evokes the Pope's statement, "È troppo vero! È troppo vero!," meaning "It's true, it's real", when he saw his own portrait. The feminist Rewind Collective on the other hand, takes misrepresented women as their point of departure in the *Double Exposure* series, of which *Marie Antoinette #1* is a part. Rendering the last queen of France before the French Revolution as a seductively glitching diptych that moves, arm raised, the work pays homage to this misunderstood historical figure who was famous for being publicly guillotined following the abolition of the monarchy in France. The doubling of Marie Antoinette's figure captures her mutability, offering an avenue for compassion and reconceptualization.

Franco-Algerian artist Neil Beloufa uses humor to inflect his digital amalgamation of the past with the present. *Deepino 4D Max*, part of the *Deepino Pro Collection* series, interrogates what the Nespresso coffee machine would look like if it were an artifact from the Baroque era. The results are imaginative and disconcerting as this anthropomorphic machine, also presented as a bronze sculpture, morphs into hybrid creatures, referencing the Philosopher's stone and Benvenuto Cellini's salt cellar for King Francis I. A symbol of luxury, elitism and neoliberal capitalism, the work alludes to surplus value and the machinations of coffee production.

Untitled (Night roses) by American multimedia artist Sara Ludy considers the richness of digital materiality and dimensionality in a completely different way, creating a dreamlike, sensory experience in 2D that's akin to 3D. In her work, spectral forms are interlaced and spliced in a layering of

texture, with opalescent sediments in the foreground and astral galaxies in the background.

In the exhibition baroque motifs from Greek and Roman mythology can be found in the work of Singapore-based artist Yeo Shih Yun, Tokyo-based French illustrator Botchy-Botchy and UK-based artist and designer Brendan Dawes.

In *Ethereal Glory* Yeo represents the Greek concept of ‘aether’, a personification of the sky and the god of the heavens, in a reinterpreted Chinese ink painting on linen in blue and gold swathes with white streaks created by toy robots. She transforms and assembles this screen painting into a zen-like image that moves in an anti-clockwise wave, particle by particle.

Inspired by the nine-headed serpentine monster Hydra from Greek and Roman myths, Botchy-Botchy uses augmented reality software to populate his musical animation and Edo-style ink drawing *Hydra Algorithmica* with a cast of characters including a female samurai, a Yūrei (or Japanese ghost) and a six-headed Hydra, whose appendages take on different forms — from a fantastical dotted dinosaur inspired by Yayoi Kusama to a monster evocative of Japanese sci-fi.

Dawes on the other hand, draws from the bust of ancient Greek goddess Aphrodite (the Roman Venus), which morphs and ripples to become a sculptural form that is 3D-printed in resin. The title of the work, *La Primavera* comes from Antonio Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons (Spring)*, which is combined with Baroque outlines to generate an intricate structure marked with golden spheres and floating white tendrils. Music becomes abstraction, movement and form in a sonic visualization of a moment in time.

Vivaldi also modulates *peep-o-rama: platonic dialogues* by Brooklyn-based artist Carla Gannis, where sound, fantasy, poetry and technicolor merge. Drawing from the mid-17th century perspective box by Dutch Baroque artist Samuel van Hoogstraten, one of the most intricate existing in the world today, optical illusion is explored through two peepholes in a sculpture revealing a mind-bending interior adorned with AI-generated patterns from illicit Times Square peep shows to paintings of

Dutch interiors. The digital work depicts figurative chess pawns, a cyborg queen, the artist's avatar, Schrödinger's cat in the form of a Japanese Lucky Cat figurine, and a spoken word recording from "Platonic Dialogues for Web3 - Between the Ghost of Samuel van Hoogstraten and his Cyborg Queen Mother" by Geoffrey P. Lewis, a text which also accompanies the peep box sculpture.

Pioneering American digital artist Claudia Hart takes musical performance in representational space to another level in a mesmerizing 3-channel work *Alice XR: A Machine For Thinking*, featuring an avatar dancing in a live performance staged by ballerina Kristina Isabelle to a projected musical improvisation by cellist Danielle DeGrutolla. Like in Gannis's work, all walls are covered, but with graphic, augmented reality wallpaper, which also comes as a standalone, and is layered in grids of moving clocks and symbols, and inspired by Alice in Wonderland motifs.

Another work which transports the viewer to another time and place is the kaleidoscopic *The Basilica of Artificial Consciousness* by California-based Leo Isikdogan and Emerson Barrett, a collaboration between an artist-engineer and celebrity drummer from the rock band Palaye Royale, respectively. In their swirling vision one can discern statues, monuments, geometries, apertures and elaborate architecture, created with a custom-designed AI art model — their matching print looks like a spectacular Baroque-like painting.

Digital Reminiscences by Italian digital artist and scenographer Vittorio Bonapace creates a 17th-century palatial environment housing robots who seem to have just gathered in a live drawing session around the famous, reclining Pauline Bonaparte sculpted by Antonio Canova. The scene includes sculptures and a salon hanging of iconic Baroque paintings which become flickering screens pulsating to techno music.

AI Baroque Painting by Istanbul-based new media studio Ouchhh, which comes with a data sculpture, is similarly immersive. Emerging from a dataset of 8,379 widely recognized baroque paintings and over a 100 years of art history, Ouchh's work uses AI and GAN algorithms to incorporate the chiaroscuro technique, an interplay between light and dark to create the

theatrical ambience popular in Baroque art. The algorithm endlessly produces dynamic folds, tunnels, and endlessly changing waves.

This is an exhibition that is not only conceptually driven by art history. It showcases works that carry historical weight while firmly belonging to the future of art and the blockchain world, bridging the past with the future. Here, the physical world is the digital sphere's parallel universe.