LOW FORM
Imaginaries and Visions in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

An exploration of the technological and surreal imaginaries of contemporary artists through computer generated dreams, creative algorithms and avatars that question the meaning of existence

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Rome, July 2018. An avatar that asks itself about the meaning of life, two robots exploring the relationship between man and machine, a live simulation that self-replicates infinitely, constructing ever-different worlds, hybrid forms of a Dada-Surrealist flavour, Rubens' *Bellona* obsessively redrawn by a piece of software, stock market trends that become the colours in abstract paintings. All this and more is included in *LOW FORM. Imaginaries and Visions in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, a project curated by **Bartolomeo Pietromarchi** that runs from **20 October 2018** to **24 February 2019**, bringing the work of **16 international artists** to MAXXI.

LOW FORM is not **just an exhibition but a workshop for study and debate** on themes and issues associated with humanity's relationship with technology and the incredible scenarios opened up by its evolution. A broad-based approach that will develop a rich programme of **encounters**, featuring international experts and academics such as **Padre Paolo Benanti**, **Luciano Floridi** and the artist **Jon Rafman**, a **video review**, and a new **publication** from *cura.books* with an anthology of important theoretical texts including those by **James Bridle**, **Nora Khan**, **Luciana Parisi** and **Hito Steyerl**, as well as previously unseen visual contributions by the artists.

The participating artists have exhibited in many of the most important international institutions, from **MoMA** to the **New Museum** in New York, to the **Serpentine Gallery** in London, to the **Stedelijk Museum** in Amsterdam. All are leading exponents of the *Millennial Generation*, explorers of a new imaginary produced by the evolution of artificial intelligence and prompted by the on-going digital revolution, they share an interest in producing dystopian visions of the present and the future.

Capable of shifting between diverse and transverse cultural references, and influenced by globalised culture and the contamination between disciplines, their work – hybrid creations that weave visual, digital and sound elements – represents a Surrealism for the 21st century that explores technological subconscious, automatic processes, creative algorithms and Deep Dream technology.

LOW FORM makes real the virtual panorama in which the artists are immersed to present, in an **immersive, multimedia and multisensory display**, **more than 20 large installations**. These include *im here to learn so :)))))* (2017) by **Zach Blas & Jemima Wyman**, which features *Tay*, a chatbot with an artificial intelligence component created by Microsoft but then abandoned in 2016 after it had been hacked. The artists have the character of this 3D avatar speak in a four-channel video edited with a psychedelic backdrop created using the Deep Dream technology, a computer vision programme. *Tay* asks itself about the meaning of its existence and manifests its sentiments of an intelligence frustrated by its lack of physicality.

For this exhibition, **Jon Rafman** has created *The Ride Never Ends* (2018), a work influenced by his mother's academic research in the field of child psychology. Through a series of videos, a kind of contemporary

epistolary, and a number of documents created by artificial intelligences, the work tackles the urgent issue of how *consciousness* influences on-going technological revolutions.

Cheyney Thompson presents several works from the series *Stochastic Process Paintings* that reveal the artist's interest in computer programming, as in the case of the software he has created to translate stock market trends into colour. Alongside these canvases, the series of drawings *Sets of Curves* inspired by *Bellona*, the goddess of war represented by Rubens in the painting *The Apotheosis of Henry IV* hung in the Louvre and in the studies that Cézanne realised on the same subject two centuries later. A vectorial graphic programme that analyses the curves from which the figure is composed has translated the image into a series of never identical replicas.

Luca Trevisani, with his sculptures *caldo (Giorgio Manganelli)* (2017) and *Wireless Fidelity* (2018)**,** realised with feathers printed with a UV ray machine, presents a reflection on *hybrid materials*, an expressive experimentation between natural and artificial.

The exhibition also features *What the Sun has Seen* (2017), the video by **Agnieszka Polska**, winner of the *Nationalgalerie Prize for Young Art* in Germany. The work protests the progressive destruction of the earth through human exploitation and pollution with a 3D screening in which a great sun with a human face, created using face recognition technology, recounts as an objective observer how it sees our planet.

The Lithuanian duo **Pakui Hardware** is presenting a large installation composed of surreal sculptures from the series *On Demand* (2017). Exhibited this year at the Musée d'Orsay in Paris and at the 13th Baltic Triennale in Vilnius, these works are born out of the interaction between nature and artifice, analysing the way in which human and natural forms are modelled by technology. The duo's research reveals a hybrid imaginary that creates a dialogue between Duchamp-esque echoes, celibate machines and science fiction.

Alongside these works the great LED wall by **Ian Cheng**, *Emissary Sunsets the Self (ESTS)* (2017), exhibited at MoMA PS1 in New York and the Serpentine Gallery in London, where in a landscape generated by a video game motor, characters and situations infinitely evolve with no human interaction: simulated worlds and atemporal narrations based on outlines randomly repeated by a computer in which the finale is open and in continuous evolution.

The exhibition also includes a piece by **Jamian Juliano-Villani**, the New York artist whose work is characterised by an endless weave of chaotic compositions and a refusal of abstraction and technique; Juliano-Villani tends towards a simple expression of herself, her life and experiences, a *self-exegesis*, an attempt to define her anxieties. The protagonists of her multi-level narrations are frequently characters drawn from comics, animated cartoons, books and magazines.

The exhibition concludes with *Do you like Cyber?* (2017), an installation recreated for the museum spaces by **Emilio Vavarella**, an artist and researcher at Harvard University's department of Visual and Environmental Studies. Composed of three mechanical arms and three parametric speakers, the work explores the hacking in 2016 of a dating site. The incident caused a reaction among chatbots active online, which began communicating between themselves rather than with the users, acting as a cue for a debate on the interaction between man and machine and the anarchic independence of the latter.

In an era in which technologies evolve at an increasingly rapid pace and where we are questioning how far the relationship between man and machine can go, *LOW FORM* presents the visions of artists showing a present and a future, the representation of which is the offspring of technological unconsciousness and a dilated imaginary, in which traditional analogical references and the contemporary hyperconnected digital consciousness are combined.

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