Jonathan Yeo

PERSONAL STUDY

'I hope these pieces not only show how artists can make use of new technology in unexpected ways, but also offer a speculative glimpse of how we all might use them in the future.'

Jonathan Yeo is an artist who challenges the line between contemporary and classic art, by testing new and upcoming media with a painterly method. In an exhibition 'From Life', created by the artist, he unveiled the first virtual reality to real-life artwork to share how new technology can be used to create and manipulate artwork in ways past mediums haven't been able to. Yeo aimed to bridge the gap between traditional painting and sketching art styles by showing how the evolving craft can be incorporated into current art.

'A cutting-edge experiment between virtual reality technology and art'.

From my study, I expect to find that the majority of artists don't like the idea of technology being a regular medium, as we see lots of backlash throughout the media. I will look at Yeo, and other artists' work involving modern computer-based techniques and think about how these could affect the future of art, and whether it is feasible that these art styles will become a recurring theme in creations in years to come.

'Homage to Paolozzi' by Jonathan Yeo would be categorised as a turning point in not only self-portraiture but artistic production. The sculpture was the first of Yeo's 3D works, him having never worked off-canvas before, and shows a liveliness through the composition, it being not a solid structure but rather lots of pieces that curve to form the organic shape that is the artist's face. Despite not being of the same media as his previous works, the sculpture displays the same character as Yeo's other pieces, through the gestural and abstract strokes which make his pieces so recognisable.

Homage to Paolozzi

'What's exciting is how the final bronze structure precisely captures the free, expressive movements that were previously only possible in paintings.'

The work was created for an exhibition 'From Life', which wanted to explore how art practice and portraiture evolve with new developments in technology, with other artists such as Jenny Saville and Chantal Joffe also making appearances. For Jonathan Yeo, he was interested in the potential of new technology, especially virtual reality, and he always wanted to explore the 3D realm of the art world, however, he was resistant as he hadn't been taught. This was an opportunity to create a sculpture with a technique completely new to everyone.

The process involved the application 'Tilt Brush' which was brand new and involved a lot of trial and error, as the program was fresh and still had lots of bugs, but also lots of corners to explore. Yeo imported a 3D scan of his head into the application, then began working on the piece, using the same motions as he would in any other of his paintings to keep the same essence.

Once completed he struggled to find a way to get the creation into the physical world, before being encouraged to 3D print the piece. Yeo cast the plastic sculpture in copper, a sturdy material which in the past similar sculptures were made from, giving the finished piece a physical and tangible body, to contrast with the immaterial form the piece was in for most of its creation.

'Bronze captures that sense of permanence, which contrasts so beautifully with the ethereal and almost non-existing quality of the virtual drawing.'

Virtual reality has the means to open a whole new art style, as technology is becoming more readily accessible, we may find a surge of people who use this to create completely different works. There will also be more traditionalists who want to stick to their method of painting or those more restrictive, who shun the idea of such a technique being described as artwork .

Jonathan Yeo had always been a traditional creator, working solely on portraits using classic media like oil paints, however, even he welcomed the new method, which could help others step out of their comfort zone and into this new territory. 'Homage to Paolozzi' makes the viewers question their perception of what art is, and, for some, excites it as it is the opening of a new door in the art world.

Espen Kluge's collection 'Alternatives' provides a refreshing approach to the usual monotonous and repetitive AI arts that are constantly being produced. Kluge shows a thoughtfulness behind his works, which to some more close-minded can't be observed, as he contemplates composition with masses of reoccurring lines in geometric patterns that connect like strings, pulling each piece into one harmonious artwork.
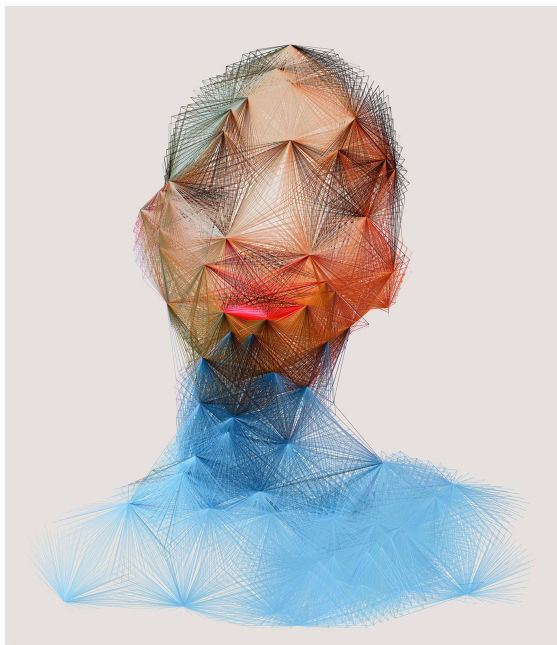

Alternatives

'A thoughtful lens into the nuanced world of human emotion '

He takes inspiration from other more 'classical' artists, one, the Russian constructivist Naum Gabo, who shares a likeness through the stark architectural format to each piece, a distinction to more generic portraits which display curvature and a softness. In contrast to the more sombre colour palette constructivists use, Kluge's pieces are often vibrant and saturated adding to the portrait's liveliness.
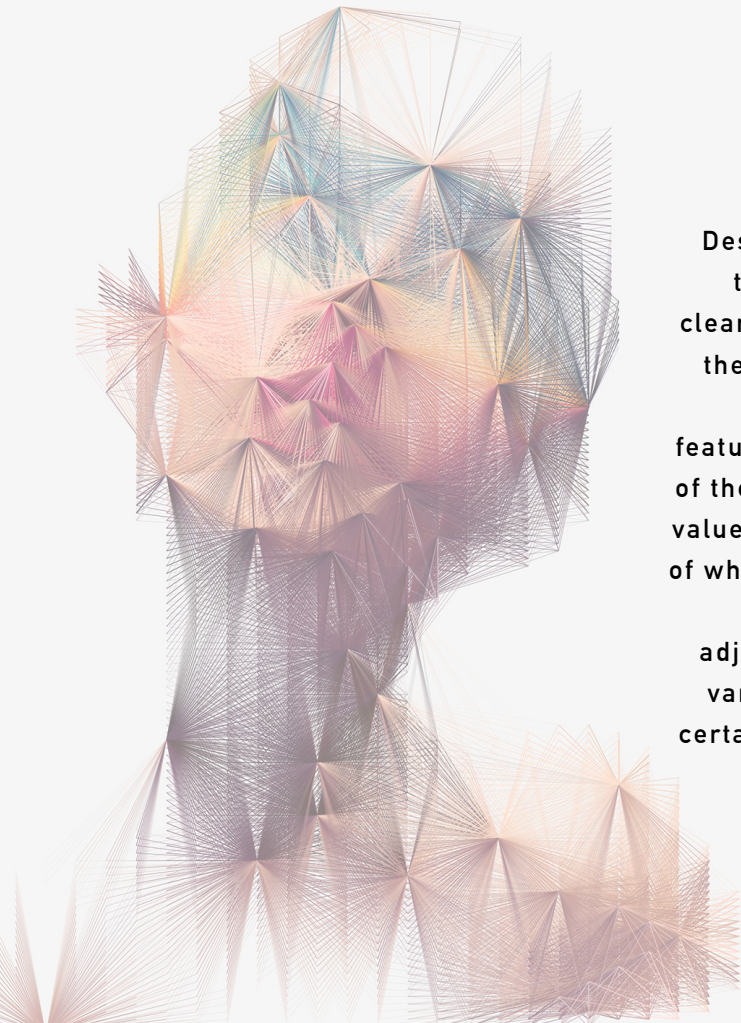
Despite being abstract, the subject matter is clear, observers can feel the emotion of the face without seeing its features. This is because of the range of tones and values each image holds, of which Kluge can spend over an hour just adjusting the code loop variables to focus on a certain colour more than another.

He created the code years prior, but it failed, however, he felt there was something important and worth saving in the letters and numbers. In 2019 the artist reconfigured his programme to create unique pieces of art, through a process of inputting a collection of photos into the code, where vectors are drawn and these images are generated in multiple variations, for Kluge to pick and choose which pieces he feels are acceptable for his collection.

Each piece in the collection 'Alternatives' shows variation, not just because they are created completely randomly, but because Espen Kluge played with line density and quantity, creating some significantly denser pieces, and some that are sparser and airier, which sitting next to each other balance out, and make the viewer appreciate each work individually. This leaves observers questioning whether the finished visual piece is the artwork or rather the code and script behind each work.
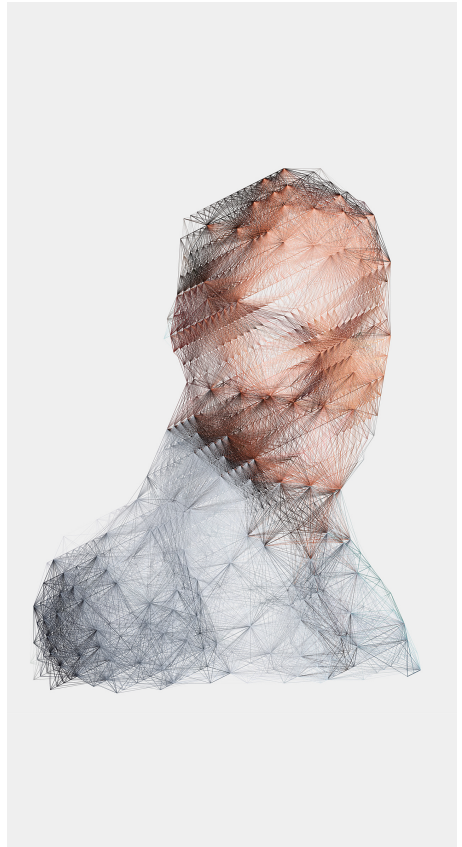
The idea that these portraits tell a whole new story, unique to that of the origins of their original input images, potentially influenced the collection's title, as though these people live alternative lives to what their photographed pasts lived, giving each one a charming charisma and personality.
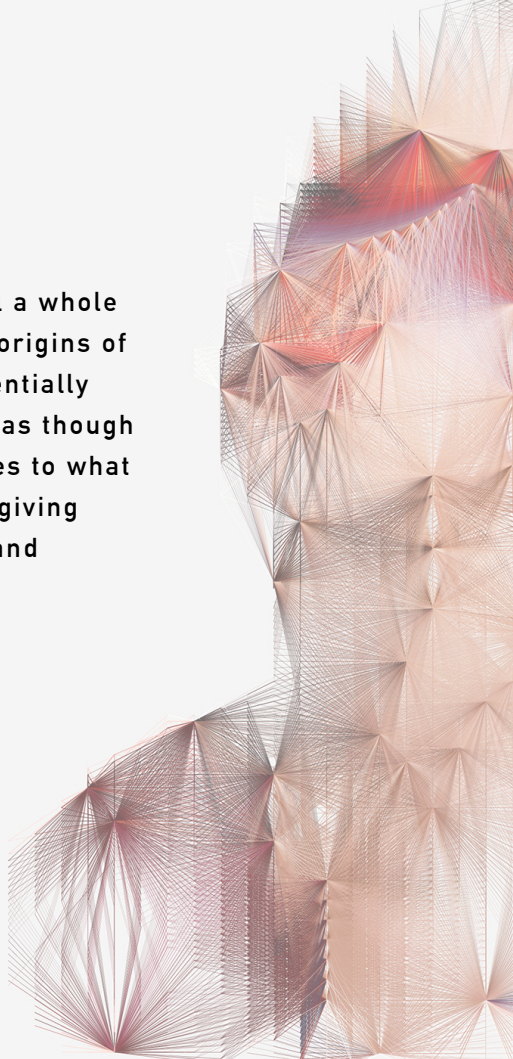
The name 'alternatives' could also be a reference to this alternative reality in which they were created, not so physical as most portraits of the past are (sculptures or paintings).

'My vision for the project was to generate beautiful and interesting portraits that tell their own story, and to find a dynamic and organic form, avoiding the typical ''nearness'' of computer-generated art'

Kluge's works could fall into some controversy as he sells each piece as NFTs, a cryptocurrency that has become well known for its association with art scams and has been criticised as cheap and gimmicky to those who don't these types of pieces as real art. For some, however, AI art could represent the divide between the current generation of creation and previous eras.
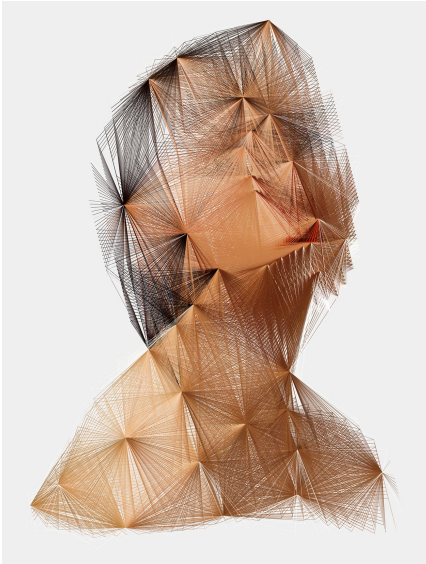
Memories of Passers-by I

'Memories of Passersby' created by Mario Klingemann is a machine that can survive on its own, creating a never-ending sequence of portraits, the first of its kind. The machine itself is neither code nor program but a revolutionary AI sequence which can combine pre-existing images to create unique portraits

Klingemann inputs images of paintings by the great masters in history, and each output observes its previous and feeds back a stream of images and faces. The constant flow adds movement to the piece and gives it an eerie liveliness, as each face pushed out feels somewhat familiar to the observer, and then the face fades away and gets forgotten.

Every action the machine makes happens in real-time, which Klingemann described as 'risky', however, the overall effect is much more personal than any premade sequence that loops back and starts all over as much other AI art does today.
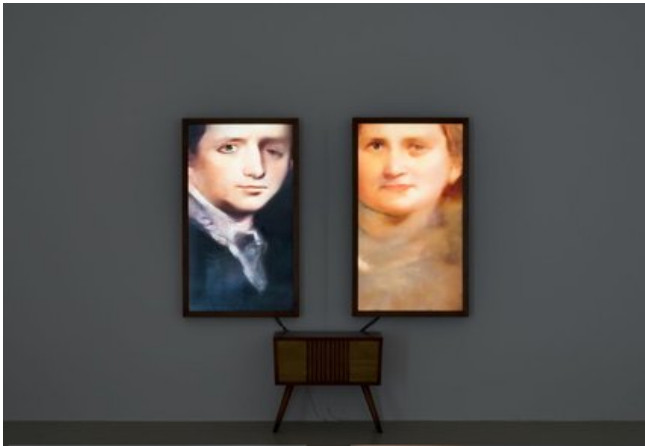
The artwork itself is two portrait screens against a wall, with a case sitting on the floor in front harbouring the computer to which the images are created. There is a contrast between the plain minimalist frames of the two screens, and the highly detailed, traditionally crafted case hiding the inner works, perhaps to symbolise that the creation on the screen is what everyone should pay attention to, and not the inner workings.

Klingemann himself commented on how people never refer to the piano as the artist, but the pianist playing it, so why should his piece be any different? "There are neuro networks involved — they are my brushes", he states.
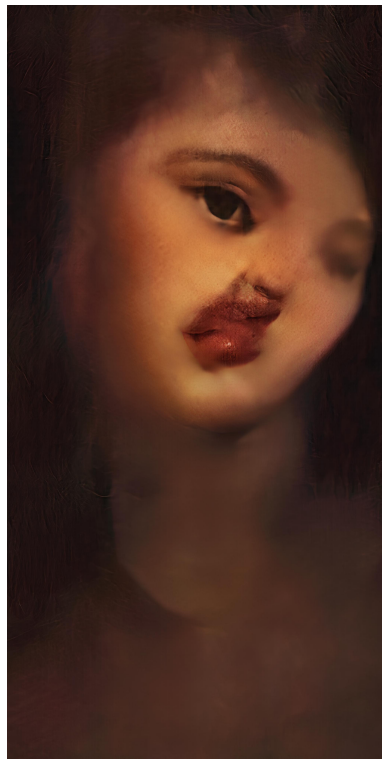
Mario's work could be described as a step forward in the field of art, the piece constantly creating unique pieces, being referred to as a 'self-contained creative agent'. He ingeniously combats those who dislike modern technology's marks in the art world, by using pieces from some of the most famous artists in his work, to challenge their feelings of what art is. If a person likes classical art, and portraiture paintings, which are what his art is comprised of, what is it about his piece that they don't like? Potentially the method or just the drastic change to the way new art is created.

'A pioneering work of artificial intelligence'

Klingemann is already coming up with new ideas of how he can use this technology to create other pieces, which could give hope to other artists who want to create similar pieces to have the technologies more readily accessible.
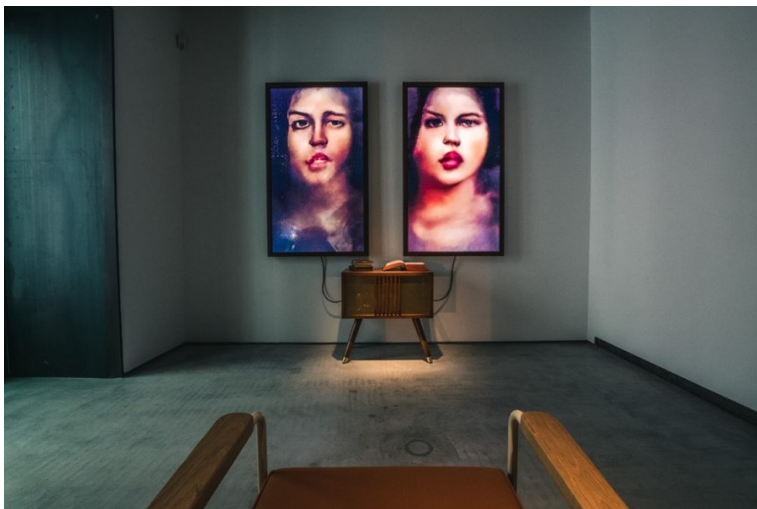
After studying the work of Jonathan Yeo and other modern creators I am surprised to see that there is significantly less backlash towards their craft than I had initially thought. I am glad to see that the art world can move forward and accept these new ways to create work and, despite some negative opinions, feel that this art medium will become more common.

These types of creations are more than just face-value art, there is a deeper meaning behind them in terms of the process that they were created and the materials that they were used to do so. Especially in Jonathan Yeo's sculpture, the thought behind casting his piece in such a solid metal like bronze signifies that this new era of art is a part of history and will always be remembered as a permanent development leading to this new age of art.
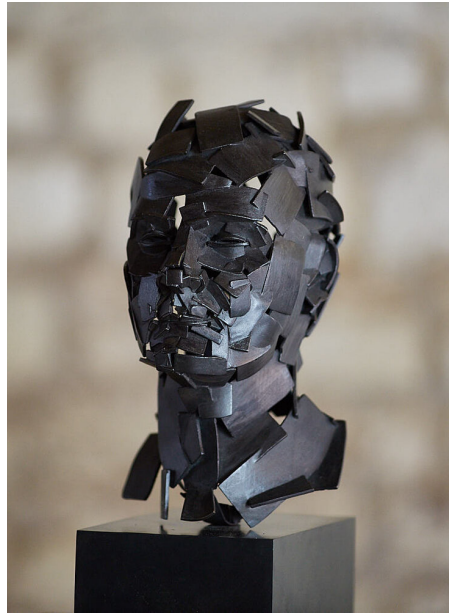
These pieces created by long lines of code and programming show a more thought-out deliberate process than what most of its critics would believe. The portraits made up of thousands of lines of delicate code indicate how individual a person can be, and how much they are all their interests and abilities combined not just the person you first see. This makes these pieces much more
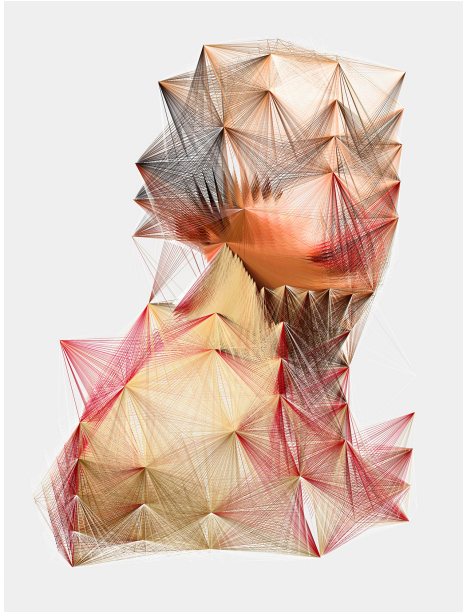
I believe that we are experiencing a turnover in the art world, with so many ways to create work being so freely accessible to anyone leading to multiple pathways unlike anything we have seen before, with the impact of monetisation becoming a much bigger factor than before. From the uprising of NFTs, a cryptocurrency of digital works to further solidify ownership and monetary value, being the first of its kind which shares divided opinion, to the physical but still digital works we see on screens in galleries and social media, there is a lot to take in for those who are used to traditional art but want to learn these new techniques. Jonathan Yeo perfectly encapsulates the entryway of such technologies by combining a more familiar and recognisable art style and finished product with this seemingly daunting process to show potential artists just how exciting the new realm of knowledge can be.

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