FMAV FONDAZIONE MODENA ARTI VISIVE

Quayola, *Iconographies #20: Tiger Hunt after Rubens*, still from video (detail)

Quayola
Ultima perfezione

Curated by Daniele De Luigi
18 September 2020 – 10 January 2021

Fondazione Modena Arti Visive

Palazzo Santa Margherita, Sale Superiori
Corso Canalgrande 103, Modena

Fondazione Modena Arti Visive presents *Ultima perfezione*, solo exhibition by the artist **Quayola** (Rome, 1982). Curated by Daniele De Luigi and produced by FMAV in partnership with Marignana Arte gallery in Venice, it will be held in the Sale Superiori on the second floor of Palazzo Santa Margherita **from 18 September 2020 to 10 January 2021**. The exhibition, opening on the occasion of festival*filosofia* 2020, this year dedicated to "Macchine" (18-20 September 2020), is the artist's first solo show in an Italian institution and the result of Fondazione Modena Arti Visive's participation in the Art Verona 2019 Level 0 Prize, involving 13 of the main museums and contemporary art organizations in Italy.

Quayola challenges the **traditions of western art**, rethinking them through the most advanced **contemporary technologies**. He gives technology a new role: no longer a tool, it becomes a partner. Artist and technology deal eye to eye and explore **new possible ways of looking at reality**. Technology ceases to bow down to human beings and so becomes the Roman artist's accomplice in formulating fresh languages. By extension, it creates new categories which are now part of the everyday life, abstract thinking and aesthetic sensitivity of contemporary humankind. Quayola's research is built on this anthropological premise, taking the painting and sculpture of the old masters as its starting point. His choice of approach results in works that use both technological and traditional media, underlining the **dialogue between past and present**. The media chosen by the artist are prints and sculptures in different materials, but also videos, audiovisual performances and immersive installations, often in venues of historical architectural importance.

The exhibition revolves around the **idea of perfection** and its meaning in the history of western art. In **Giorgio Vasari's** *The Lives* this term is often used to indicate **the achievement of excellence by**

painters, sculptors and architects, in line with the **universally agreed canons of harmony and beauty**. Quayola **makes use of classical, modern and Baroque masterpieces, applying algorithms to them** to seek out these canons, and question the fundamental principles of artistry. The rules laid down by historiographers and critics are rendered into sets of information, which, when read by the machine, take on a new value and **give rise to new aesthetic codes**.

The exhibition presents a **video-installation** and **four series of works, two of which have been produced for the occasion**: a sequence of sculptures and a series of works on paper, some of which will become part of the drawing collections managed by Fondazione Modena Arti Visive.

In the first room, visitors are met by *Pluto and Proserpina*: a sequence of sculptures taken from the **"Sculpture Factory"** performance-art installation which **research classical sculpture using robotic means while drawing inspiration from Michelangelo's "non-finito" technique**. The works on display are inspired by the renowned Baroque masterpiece by Bernini *The Rape of Proserpina* (1621-1622): they are some of the endless variations made by an **industrial robot**, set the task of **exploring possible simulations leading to the creation of the figure**. The robot never completes the image, however, and **breaks off the action at a different point of the process each time**. Hence, the goal is not to make the finished form, but to investigate the processes involved in arriving at that form. The robot makes its way in the matter, following a new and independent logic guided by a sequence of algorithms. And along the way, it makes the traditional artistic technique re-emerge.

Alongside the sculptures, there are also some **prints** taken from the **"Iconographies"** series, a project centred around **computational analysis of famous works** from the great Renaissance and Baroque painting tradition. The religious or mythological scenes, in this case the *Tiger Hunt* painted by Pieter Paul Rubens in 1616, are read using **computer vision systems**, which **identify particular areas of interest in the image** on the basis of parameters provided by the artist, such as colour, light and chromatic density. The images are hence **transformed into abstract compositions**, while the figuration nevertheless retains a degree of familiarity. In *Iconographies #20: Tiger Hunt after Rubens*, computerized coding completely detaches the work from the historical story, and so the Flemish masterpiece acquires new authenticity, and can be discovered afresh.

Again a painting by Rubens, this time *The Descent from the Cross* housed in the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Lille, provides the basis for the **video diptych *Strata #4*** on display in the second room. *Strata* is a series of video installations which, **using** similar **computational processes, translates paintings, Baroque frescoes and Gothic stained glass** into **a new kind of abstraction**. The software rereads the images according to the parameters given by Quayola, creating new ones that appear to be **broken down into their primary components**. So the rules of composition are revealed, creating a powerful metaphor in which history is seen as accumulation and sedimentation rather than a linear process.

The next room hosts *Adoration after Botticelli,* a work comprising 10 prints dedicated to the *Adoration of the Magi* by the Florentine maestro. Even though this too belongs to the **"Iconographies"** series, here Quayola avoids all figuration to concentrate on the **relationship between text and image**. While the left-hand frame contains the words – in English – dedicated by Giorgio Vasari to the perfection with which Botticelli painted the faces of the figures and created the composition of the picture, the

nine frames on the right display the cold set of codes that translate the famous masterpiece into computer language.

The exhibition is rounded off by **ten new engravings**, also part of the **"Iconographies"** series, which analyse the iconographic motif of Judith and Holofernes, subject of countless depictions over the centuries. Quayola's practice hinges around experimenting endless possibilities. Therefore, it has a **strong link with the concept of iconography**, which is a topic investigated in many ways by different creative minds. **In this case, it is human intelligence that works alongside artificial intelligence to explore a new version of the famous theme**. For the whole series, the artist selected sixty of these works, entrusting them to a personalized software program that translated them into **monochrome abstractions**, then printed on paper.

Quayola (Rome, 1982) lives and works between Rome and London. This life experience has strongly influenced his research in its aim to establish a relationship between classical and modern art and new technologies. His work has been displayed at numerous institutions, amongst which Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg; V&A Museum, London; Park Avenue Armory, New York; Bozar, Brussels; National Art Center, Tokyo; UCCA, Peking; How Art Museum, Shanghai; SeMA, Seoul; Bienal, São Paulo; Triennale, Milan; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, Barcelona; British Film Institute, London; Cité de la Musique, Paris; and Grand Theatre, Bordeaux. He has also been a guest at some of the main international festivals, such as Elektra Festival, Montreal; Sonar Festival, Barcelona; and Sundance Film Festival. In 2013, Quayola received the Golden Nica at the prestigious Ars Electronica festival in Linz. Quayola has also often worked on music projects alongside composers, orchestras and musicians, amongst which the London Contemporary Orchestra, National Orchestra of Bordeaux, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Vanessa Wagner, Jamie XX, Mira Calix, Plaid and Tale Of Us.

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Venue
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Dates
18 September 2020 – 10 January 2021

Opening hours
Wednesday, Thursday and Friday: 11 am-1 pm / 4-7 pm; Saturday, Sunday and public holidays: 11 am-7 pm
25 December 2020 and 1 January 2021: 4-7 pm

During festival*filosofia*
Friday 18 September: 9am-11pm
Saturday 19 September: 9am-11pm
Sunday 20 September: 9am-9pm
During the festival, entry to all the exhibitions will be free of charge

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Entry
Adults € 6.00 | Concessions € 4.00
Free entry: Wednesdays | first Sunday of the month | festival*filosofia*
Buy online on Vivaticket

Produced by
Fondazione Modena Arti Visive

In collaboration with
Marignana Arte, Venice

Information
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Fondazione Modena Arti Visive, founded in 2017 by Comune di Modena and Fondazione di Modena, is a cultural production and professional development centre whose goal is to spread contemporary art and visual culture. With its set of venues, Fondazione Modena Arti Visive takes up the legacy of the three institutions merged into it – Galleria Civica di Modena, Fondazione Fotografia di Modena and Museo della Figurina – to form a veritable cultural district. The foundation proposes and organizes exhibitions and advanced training courses, workshops, performances and conferences, as well as promoting the collections that it manages and building a system of networks on a local and a wider scale. Fondazione Modena Arti Visive is increasingly linking its exhibition activities with the educational programmes at the School of Advanced Studies, which offers the Master's in Contemporary Images and ICON course for Curators of Contemporary Images.