C24 GALLERY

PURGATORY
NEW WORKS BY GABE BC

Thursday, July 27 – Thursday, October 5, 2023

Left: *Annunciation*, 2023, Looping Video Sculpture, Tin, Glass, Video Screen, Acrylic, Neon, 15 x 10 x 5 in.
Right: *Oracle*, 2023, Interactive Video Sculpture, Glass, Wood, Metal, 10 x 39 x 10 in.

We are thrilled to announce the opening of ***Purgatory: New works by Gabe BC* (Gabriel Barcia-Colombo)**. This exhibition is Gabe BC's first solo exhibition at C24 Gallery. ***Purgatory*** is an exploration of humanity through the lens of a machine, via Artificial Intelligence-generated images and our interactions with them. AI imagery is now everywhere, and the speed at which the images are generated is mind boggling. Amidst the relative infancy of this relentlessly evolving technology, many questions arise. Where is this going? How will this ability be used, and by whom? How do we know anymore what is real and what is machine generated? And what will be the legacy of these new capabilities?

Since 2005, Gabe BC has been creating interactive and time-based, multi-media sculptures. His work focuses on our ubiquitous relationship to media and technology, in the form of video sculptures, public video installations, and AI oracles. Exploring the dynamics of memorialization, digital preservation, and the capturing and collecting of personal memories as data, he has developed a body of work that simultaneously reaches back to his own cultural legacy while incorporating groundbreaking tools of digital communication.

Purgatory, for BC, is a kind of vigil or memorial for humanity. From a literal vigil composed of nine screens attempting to encapsulate all of humanity in symbols, to a prophetic slot machine oracle that gives advice for the end of the world, his newest collection probes the dynamics of co-creation between human and machine. Working in collaboration with artificial intelligence to carefully generate images for this show, he asks the question, "What does it mean to be human in a world where machines are evolving, learning and living beside us?" The answers are both prescient and cautionary.

Oracle is a piece inspired by the dopamine release that exists both in the mind of a gambler and that feeling we get when refreshing our social media feeds. Viewers pull a handle to receive unique messages, generated through machine learning from over 500,000 historical quotes, including everything from biblical texts and congressional speeches to modern internet influencer quotes.

Followers is a video sculpture featuring a group of heretofore strangers bonding during a shared viewing of something compelling. Is it a car crash, a great work of art, or us? The piece, housed in a large, porcelain egg, questions the role of technology in our modern-day evolution, and the instincts it may be cultivating or suppressing. This footage is also included in Gabe's five-channel video, Platform, one of the inaugural artworks currently on view in the new Grand Central Madison terminal.

Paradise is a modern homage to the tale of Adam and Eve. In this version, the fabled lovers find themselves in parallel digital worlds, naked and vulnerable, but separated by the technology that simultaneously connects them as it keeps them isolated in their own privately curated realities.

Relic is a modern interpretation of a religious relic. Traditionally relics are holy objects or pieces of a saint's body preserved to represent the connection between the holy and the human. In this case the relic can be seen as memorializing our relationship to data and our addiction to our devices—a true relic of our time. This work was created during Gabe's 2022 residency at The Neon Museum in Las Vegas, Nevada, and on display during his solo exhibition there, Simulations of the Sacred.

Annunciation is one of the sculptures in Gabe's series of nicho boxes, modern versions of the traditional folk art altars that he grew up with, as part of his family's Mexican origins. This one, based on Gabriel, the Patron Saint of Telecommunications, depicts a series of people in a state of rapture or enlightenment with their cell phones, encased in a neon nicho box. Are they having an out of body experience or simply experience a dramatic phone call.

Humanity is a large sized sculpture in the nicho box series, featuring a continuous 27-minute loop of over 200 machine-generated images of human beings morphing into one another. Using source material from the internet, BC created an image model that depicts people in various states of agony and ecstasy— a portrait of humanity through the eyes of a machine.

The third of our sculptures in BC's nicho box series, *Mother and Child* is another series of machine-generated images. For this collection, the artist trained a machine learning model on classical depictions of the Madonna and Child throughout art history, which then generated images of modern-day women and their children in similar poses. Both this work and Annunciation are comprised of 25-minute video loops.

Vigil is a sculpture featuring nine small video screens sitting in what looks like a church candle vigil. For this work, BC created a machine learning model based on a series of his own original hand drawn symbols. Each screen shows a revolving set of icons created by AI, encompassing a hybrid mix of religious, cultural and technological symbols. Each screen is independently programmed to pause on random images, resulting in a survey of humanity from the perspective of somewhere between Paleolithic cave paintings and animated gifs.

Ecstasy is an interactive video mirror composed of approximately 3,700 artificially generated human faces in various expressions of ecstasy. As the viewer approaches, their own face is used to find a companion artificial human face in a similar pose. The work begs the questions, what does ecstasy mean to a machine? Is it possible to achieve a kind of altered state of consciousness and identity through the gaze of a machine?

Ecstasy (Encapsulated) is a small video sculpture inside a scientific bell jar, featuring the same series of artificially generated human faces as the larger work, Ecstasy. In this version, a computer randomly chooses which image to stop on, as the viewer observes through the glass.