

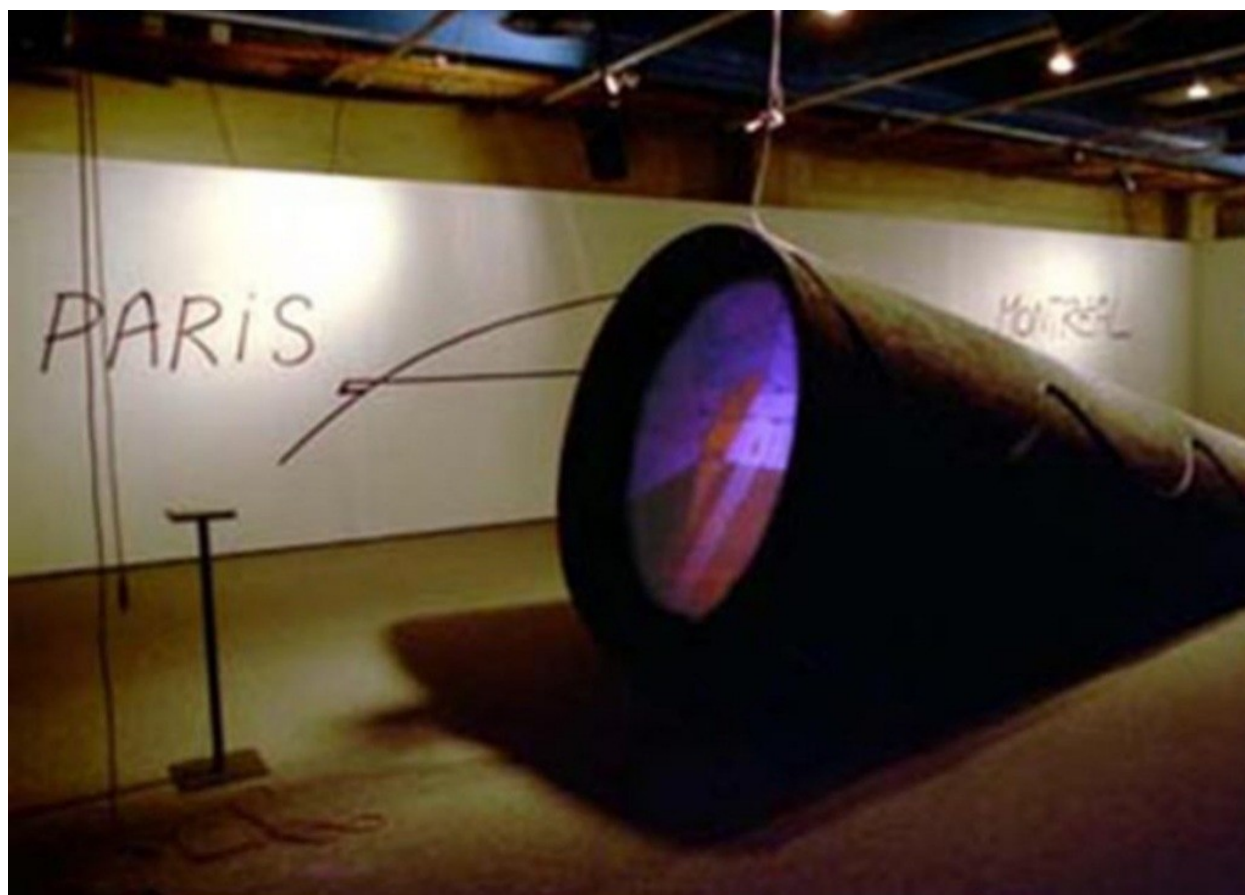
Why Virtual Art?

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Abstract: *Virtual art is here to stay. People started to create digital art in the 1950s, when the computers showed up. In the last two years, the mixture of technology with media into the process of creation impacted large areas of art and its making. In addition, as of this year, the virtual art is finally handsomely rewarded, on the NFT platforms, some digital works being sold for millions of dollars, transforming the artists in "contemporary" masters. Therefore, the virtual art will definitely have a future because the art market follows the money and the artists follow the art market.*

The virtual art has been created since the computers appeared in our lives. However, according to ARTDEX (art community and platform) - "What is Virtual Art?" (Article published on June 13th, 2019) the actual birth of virtual art happened in the 1990s, when the artists became used to the internet and started to learn the technology. That was the moment when the virtual art began to grow the roots into the art world.

The first virtual project was made by Maurice Benayoun in 1995 and it was called "The Tunnel Under the Atlantic", a tele-virtual art installation that established users situated on each side of the Atlantic Ocean, in Paris and Montreal, two towns physically distant by thousands of miles, to meet each other and interact into a virtual space.



MB Maurice Benayoun

MOBEN | The Tunnel under the Atlantic



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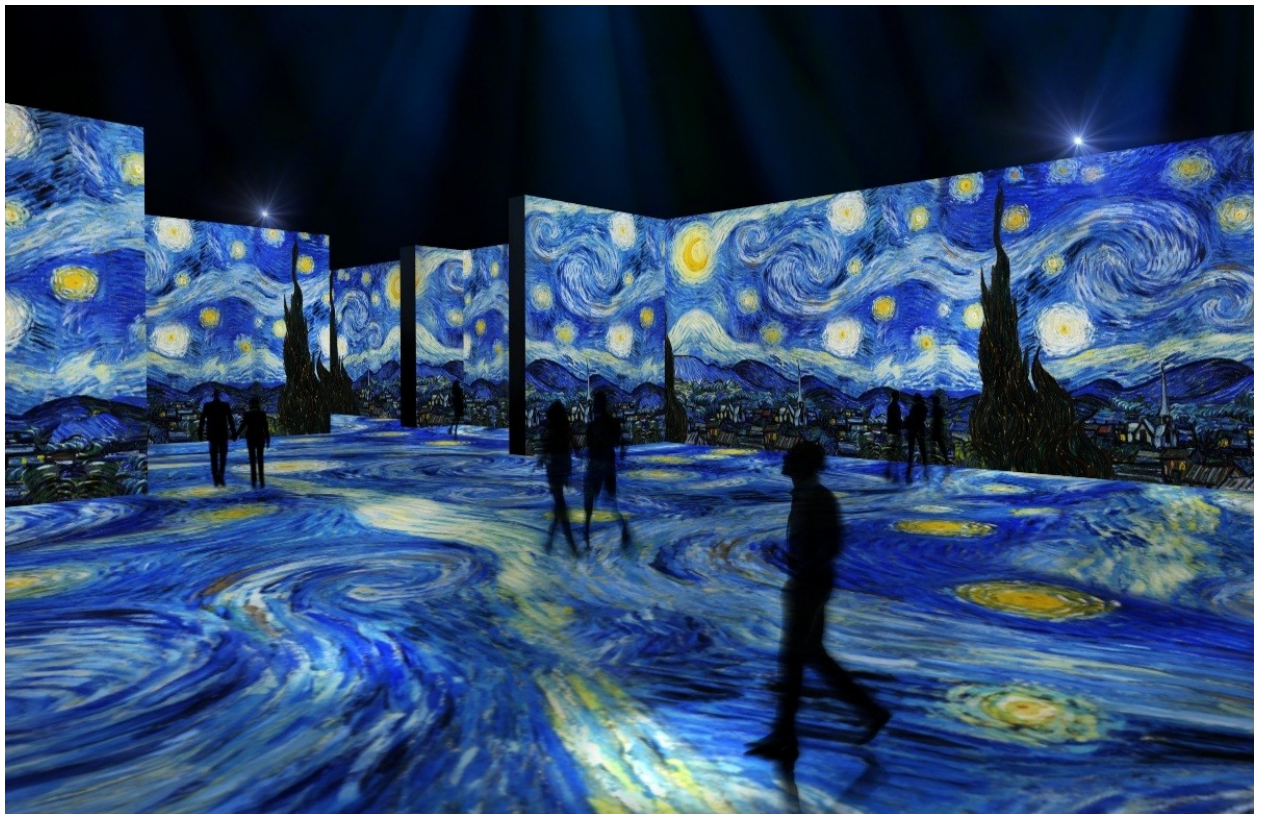
In the last 25 years the virtual art progressed tremendously, nowadays embracing numerous styles and ways of being presented to the public. Recently, numerous contemporary art galleries and museums started to offer virtual tours and professionally guided walks to the art connoisseurs and art aficionados.

Since November 2020, everyone in the US is talking about the Van Gogh virtual exhibition. It's finally arriving in Los Angeles in July 2021 and that's all the frenzy about in this metropolis. "We are so thrilled that Hollywood has embraced the Immersive Van Gogh Exhibit with open arms" says Lighthouse Producer, Corey Ross according to Forbes publication from June 10th, 2021. The tickets are selling like hot cakes and los angelinos are craving to see art. Therefore, as we can see, the fine art paintings made it into the virtual world.



 Orlando Weekly

Touring Immersive Van Gogh exhibit is coming to Orlando in October ...



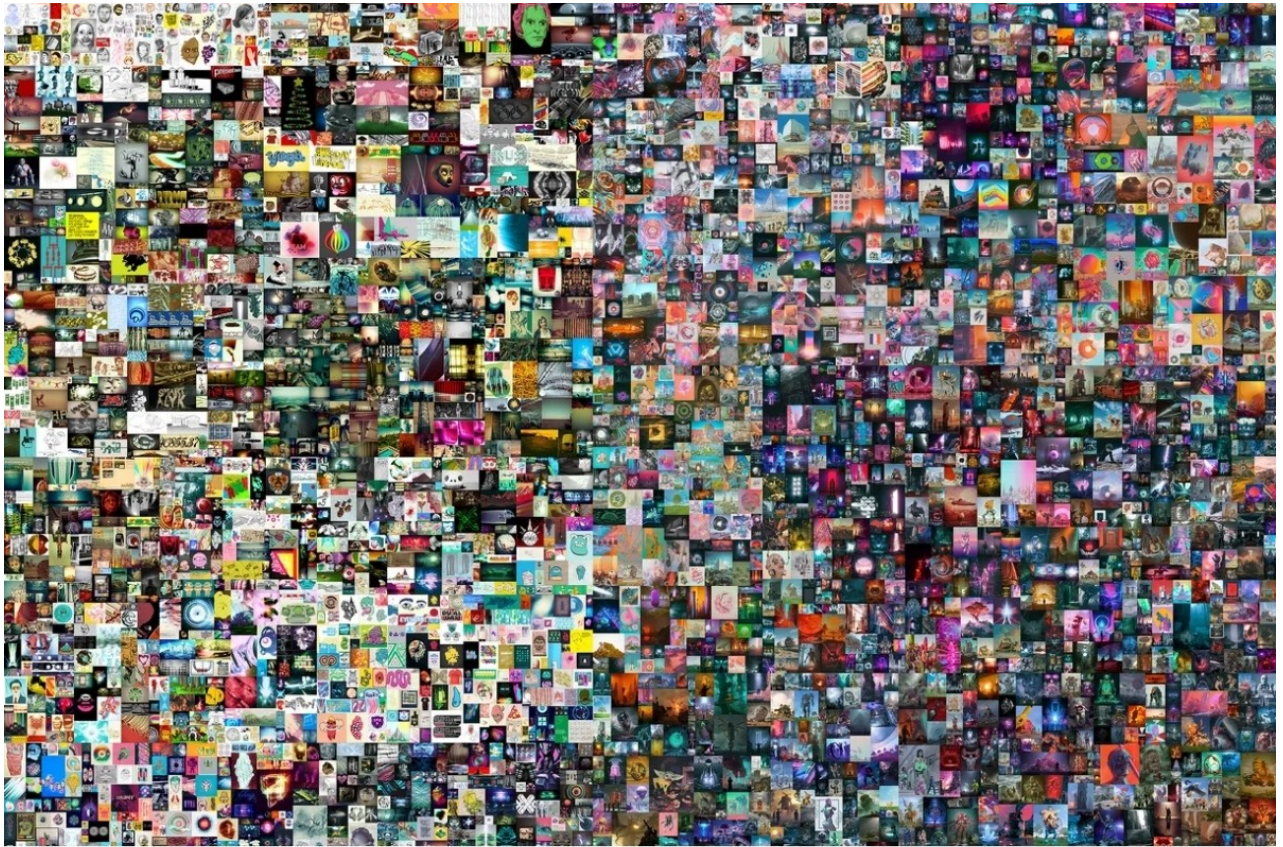
The contemporary art is already part of the virtual world through all the technology incorporated in it (computer graphics and animation, video, interactive art, and net art). Virtual art is beginning to dominate theories of art and image. "We see the rise of the computer-generated virtual image to images that seem capable of formulating an all-embracing, lifelike visual and real-time sensory sphere" says ARTDEX in the Art Guide "What is Virtual art?". Furthermore, in the last few years, the non-fungible currency came along, to support the virtual world like never was seen before. Not only that blockchain can make the art marketplace safer by verifying the authenticity and provenance of a piece of art, (as it was discussed this year at Art Basel Conversations in Basel, between journalists and artists), but it can increase the value of the marketplace. The marketplace always follows the money and the artists always follow the marketplace. Curious new relationships between art and capital are being enabled by cryptofinance, which places "monetary value" at the heart of the creative process, writes Ben Luke, in The Art Newspaper International on June 13th, 2018. Since then, artists working in revolutionary styles are capturing the NFT collectors' attention. The street style art, with its bold colors' vibes, cartoonish look and graffiti finish is thriving on the NFT platforms.

Although Mat Dryhurst, philosopher and digital artist, tweeted on December 8th, 2020: "I think NFT "Art analogy is fragile - more synonymous to me with Kinkade's galleries (successfully) targeting/flattering new money outside of "Art market", the largest and oldest internationally recognized firm of fine art auctioneers in the world, Sotheby's, already embraced the NFT (Non-fungible token) concept and creators. On June 10th, 2021, Sotheby's auctioned a CryptoPunk NFT and it sold for \$11.8 M, a record price for a piece from the CryptoPunk Collection, as reported by the house, after the auction. This was Sotheby's the world's first known NFT. In March 2021, Christie's, the world's top auction house in various respects (Kaylee Randall, Top 5 Auction Houses in the World, The Collector, August 8th, 2019) sold Beeple's NFT work "The First 5000 Days" for astonishing \$69.3 M being now the third most expensive work by a living artist sold at auction. Due to the fact that prestigious firms like Christie's and Sotheby's are paying so much attention to the digital art, and the transactions made recently by the artists who created/minted on the NFT platforms are pulling out all the stops, the virtual art is gaining more and more weight into the entertainment and financial industry.



S Sotheby's

CryptoPunk 7523 | Natively Digital: CryptoPunk 7523 | Sotheby's



Beeple's collage, *Everydays: The First 5000 Days*, sold at Christie's. | Image: Beeple

The momentum of becoming virtual is expanding to all types of industries in many ways, from taking known artworks created hundreds of years ago and transposing them into an implied reality, to building houses using a 3D printer. Some companies that are using a 3D printer to construct houses give clients the option to customize their walls inside and out, not only with specific materials (i.e., concrete) but also with chosen pictures or art. Kirk Andersen, the Director of Operations of SQ4D Inc., representing the builder of one of those homes was asked the question: "What the outside of the house could look like?" (Interview "First 3D Printed Home for Sale" with CNBC which aired on the broadcast channel in the US on February 25th, 2021). He answered: "...you can literally put any image into the 3D printer and customize the outside of the home; you can even put your face on the front of the home if you wanted to...so the possibilities are endless".

In 2019 a drone project called The Urban Flying Opera was curated by Carlo Ratti Associati, which collected some 1,200 small illustrations via an app, selecting 100 to assemble into a single mural. The line drawings were then loaded into a central control computer and painting instructions relayed to a set of four drones equipped with paint cans, which worked over a 12-hour period to put the whole painting together on a large wall. The mural is 46 feet wide and 39 feet tall, and each color layer, laid on separately, represents a different aspect of the community the project is trying to highlight. "The city is an open canvas, where people can inscribe their stories in many ways. Such processes have always been happening; however, with UFO we tried to accelerate them, using drone technology to allow for a new use of painting as a means of expression," said Carlo Ratti, CRA founder (Devin Coldewey, Tech Crunch, July 5th, 2019).



It is obvious that the technology for creating large scale real and virtual art will get more ingenious with time and the AI will encroach the art world. Art is the universal language that connects the world. Since 2017 Contemporary Art Station, based in London, Tokyo and Barcelona, facilitates for emerging and established artists to display their works, in large public spaces to a big-scale audience (like Shibuya Station in Tokyo, where an average of 2.4 million people cross the pedestrian scramble daily). Although the platform's focus is to offer artists a way to reach the big-scale audience and to turn up public spaces into art exhibitions guarantying the best audience possible, the artist's promotional costs are quite high for the emerging artists.

In a similar way, FISART could place the artists' works on various international public spaces/buildings and in fact, since we already have several cities from across the world that are participating in this program, connect them virtually through all the showcased artworks via a "virtual tunnel". Currently we have 5 countries, 10 cities, hundreds of available buildings, 50 artists, and over 400 artworks incorporated and collected for FISART. With this data and with the right sponsoring from the respective public offices and the private sector interested in developing this project, FISART could stretch out to all the major cities in the world and connect the artists to a larger audience and more collectors.

We can all envision now the future of the virtual street art, when people do not have to walk into galleries or museums to admire their favorite painting or follow their favorite contemporary artist on social media. In the future, the art, and not only the street style art, the graffiti or the cartoonish drawings will follow the people. Many styles of art will appear on the buildings (either through the projection technology or by using the 3D printing builders). Concurrently, not only the street art artists will have the access to showcase their work to the public, but also other painters, who in the past were exhibiting only in galleries or at art fairs. It is going to be a win-win situation for the artists, the public and the environment.