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Creators

Quayola's Glitchy Reimaginings of Broken Ancient Greek Artifacts

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For the latest installment in his Laocoön Fragments series, computational artist Quayola simulates fragments from an archaeological dig.

Around this time last year, computational artist Davide Quayola's Sculpture Factory was about to start robotically chiseling the Laocoön Group, an ancient sculpture considered the ideal of art by some ancient Greeks and even William Blake. With his latest show, *Fragments*, now on at bitforms gallery in New York City, Quayola returns yet again to the Laocoön sculpture with a series of computationally-replicated sculptures created to look like found archaeological fragments. These new works, like others in Quayola's ongoing Laocoön Fragments series, blend the geometric shapes of computer simulations with ancient sculptures succumbing to age and damage, creating a sort of glitchy reimagining of ancient artifacts.

Also on display are a few prints from Quayola's *Iconographies*, a series that transforms classic artworks first into point clouds and then into engravings, including one inspired by Peter Paul Rubens' famous painting *Venus & Adonis*, and two other pieces that are part of a larger series of 60 pieces. These two bodies of work fit within Quayola's ongoing research and narrative, which looks at history as some sort of catalyzer of new aesthetics and new ideas. In this research, Quayola uses machines, computers, and other systems to look at artifacts as objects of perfection through algorithms.



“I study these originals with computational systems, and what you see are the results of these processes,” Quayola tells Creators. *Fragments* explores the dimension and conceptualization of time, imbuing the artworks with the archaeological artifact effect of changes in appearance. “I’ve always been fascinated with the fact that [archaeological fragments] essentially embed these two narratives,” Quayola says. “One is the narrative of the original artwork: what is this original sculpture and who is the portrait of in the sculpture. The other narrative is the external agency or component of time and what happened to this physical sculpture over time that broke it down.”



“I quite like these two narratives that collide in dialogue,” he adds. “It’s kind of a metaphor for what I do in a way with these colliding narratives and languages that perhaps exist in this single object, and how this object has changed over time and how we’re looking at it today with these completely new pair of eyes.”

To make the sculptural elements in *Fragments*, Quayola starts with a computational system that simulates how the original sculpture might have broken into pieces. It also designs the original geometries, with generates hundreds of variations of simulations from which Quayola selects the ones for fabrication.



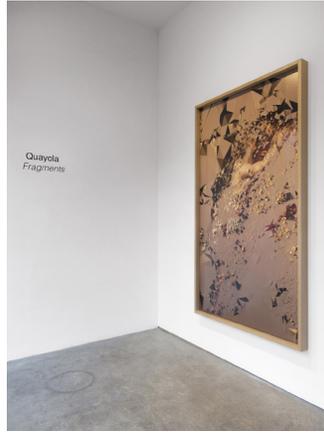
The fabrication process was a collaboration with Factum-Arte, a highly specialized workshop in Madrid, Spain. The first step involved 3D printing the Laocoön simulation with a special nylon fiber Quayola prefers over other 3D printing materials. It is precise and high-definition, free of the horizontal lines typically seen in 3D-printed objects.

From these 3D printings, Quayola and Factum-Arte made traditional molds from resin comprised of 80% iron powder and then epoxy. After casting the resin into molds, Quayola and Factum-Arte let them dry, then did some retouching before adding a patina with acids and high temperatures to better replicate the look of iron as it rusts and otherwise ages.



“On this one side you have this geometry that suggests something that comes out of a simulation,” says Quayola. “And on the other you have this patina that is a result of chemical and aging processes that are meant to make it look like an archaeological artifact.”

Showing concurrently with Fragments is Quayola’s latest video, Jardins d’Été, now on at Lio Malca Gallery in New York City. Inspired by the Impressionists, Quayola “paints” moving flowers. He does this by creating an incredibly convincing digital simulation of various paints moving on the screen, before transforming into actual video of flowers swaying in the wind.



With *Jardins d'Été*, Quayola wanted to transport himself back to the condition of the historical landscape artists. As he sees it, painters of the time immersed themselves in nature, trying to decode or synthesize it with paint. He adopts this approach for *Jardins d'Été*, but with modern technology. He has also been digitally replicating paintings from the Impressionist period by “capturing data” in the area where Van Gogh spent his final years, as well as in France’s Loire Valley, a region synonymous with Claude Monet.

“These are a series of animated algorithmic paintings using the same data from these areas,” says Quayola. “I call them paintings, though I guess they are videos in high definition. But, I think because of the nature of how they evolved they can really be thought of as canvases in a way.”

Fragments runs until April 9th at bitforms gallery.