

galerie frank elbaz.

Davide Balula

Some farmed, others mined

March 26 - May 7, 2022

Opening on Saturday, March 26, 2022

Some farmed, others mined is the most recent body of work by Davide Balula that engages with the artist's long-standing inquiry into ecology, microbial social theory, and machine-based learning systems. Balula's concerns, formalized here, highlight the entangled relations of life and non life in a moment of technocratic governance. The works hone in on the need for ecological transition, care and responsibility, while living on a damaged planet increasingly moderated by machines.

From spring 2020 to spring 2021, while living in isolation in the countryside with his family, Balula left unprimed canvases in contact with their immediate environment. These "farmed paintings" take root in earlier experiments where he would place unprimed canvases in riverbeds, inside trees, and underground, inviting a world of relations between wildlife, weathering, and environmental fluctuations. Cast in shades of green, pink, brown and black, microorganisms are captured here through abstract patterning by chance-based relations. The works speak to the greater universe, such as star systems, or viral cultures under scrutiny. They are the actants of their own scene, directly present rather than represented.

Currently, planetary life is under imminent existential and environmental threat. The announcement of the Russian-Ukraine war together with the latest IPCC report* stands as an indictment of failing political leaders and their complicity with a fossil fuel industry deeply embedded in the destruction of the earth. Balula's "A.I. Generated Instructions" allude to this stark reality while also engaging with

his past work. The texts on the screens in the gallery are not description labels per se, but orders, instructions, and direct commands from a machine trained on the artist's past projects. Awkward, even humorous in their error, one might question if giving AI such an agency of human-compatible values means that it is merely techno-solutionism?

Balula's visual output, produced in the outbreak of a global pandemic, demonstrates how microbial intelligence is central to the metabolic circuitry of life, beyond the human. Many neural networks appropriate the intelligence of microorganisms in their training. In many ways, the *Farmed Paintings* and *A.I. Generated Instructions* point to a need to transcend human-centered exceptionalism, embracing multispecies ecologies. Notably the urge for communal and embodied approaches to living and learning from human to microbe and mycelium, recalling the restorative potential of collective cognition. Such metabolic narratives acknowledge learning and knowledge-building as a form of care.

Jennifer Teets

Davide Balula is a conceptual artist working across various media and scales. He regularly collaborates with A.I. systems, poets, chefs, bacteria, dancers, musicians, fire-breathers, pickpockets etc to share a wide range of forms and sensory experiences with the audience. His practice investigates the ways that works of art may be altered by an environment where factors of change (temperature, humidity, light, etc) oscillate constantly, and reminds us that "Nature" cannot be apprehended without recognizing that air, humans, microorganisms, soil, minerals and machines are now and forever intertwined.

*IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report:
<https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/>

Artist Statement : <https://balula.org/c/o2e.html>
Climate impact Report for this exhibition is available here:
<https://www.galeriefrankelbaz.com/720/about-climate-impact-report-davide-balula>