

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Christie's auctions off artificial intelligence in the form of art

August 24, 2018



Portrait created by GAN. Image credit: Obvious

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

Auction house Christie's has brought a modern technology into a veteran industry, as it becomes the first to sell a piece of art created by a digital rather than human artist.

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Christie's will now become the first auction house to offer artwork created by an artificial intelligence solution, says the company. The move will bring AI into yet another sector in a seemingly surprising creator role, possibly shifting the AI and art industries, but some experts believe its only use is to show what the data solution can do.

"While it is fun for data scientists to play with AI capabilities, applying AI to art — to create art — in my opinion, is a waste of time," said Mark Beccue, principal analyst at Tractica, Boulder. "AI is not creative by nature.

"In our view, AI will be best used to replace redundant tasks/work and accessing and analyzing massive amounts of data very quickly," he said. "AI does well in analyzing existing data and predicting outcomes based on history.

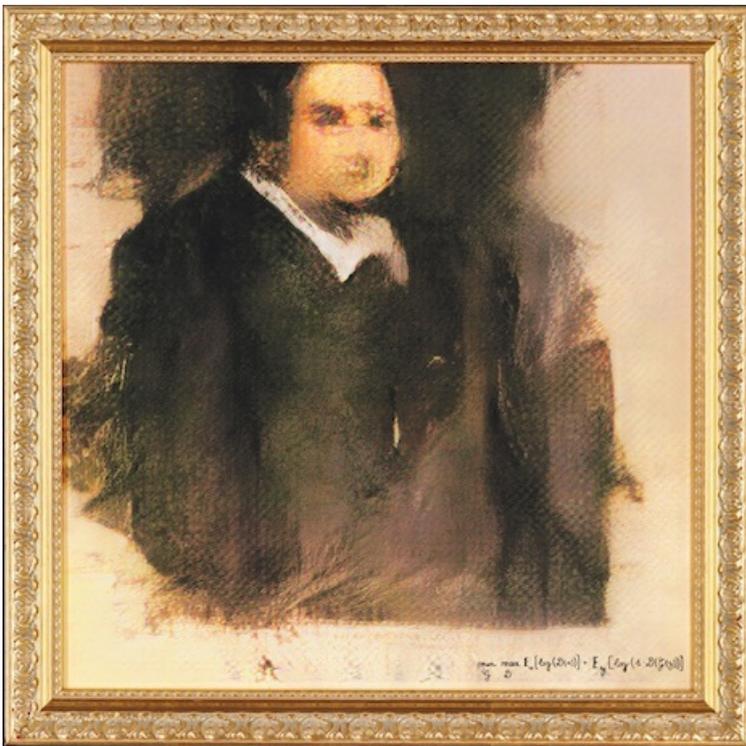
"It is not good at non-linear thinking, which only the human brain can do."

Mr. Beccue is not affiliated with Christie's, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. [Christie's](#) was reached for comment.

Art and AI

AI has entered a variety of areas in art and entertainment, as the technology becomes more sophisticated.

Artificial intelligence has typically been thought of as being linked to robots, computers and data. But now, it is even creating songs and paintings.



Christie's will put up the portrait for auction in October. Image credit: Obvious

Christie's will be ushering in AI's debut in the fine art world with a piece created by a collective from Paris named Obvious.

The group, made of machine-learning experts Hugo Caselles-Dupré, Pierre Fautrel and Gauthier Vernier, created the painting using their interface known as a generative adversarial network, GAD for short.

GAD was given 15,000 portraits created between the 14th and 20th centuries.

The solution works in two parts. The first designs a new image based on these works of art, and the second tries to determine the difference between the new painting and the originals. These parts are known as the generator and discriminator, respectively.

Once the discriminator cannot tell the difference between an authentic portrait and one that the generator has made, the piece is complete.

Obvious' goal was to prove that algorithms are able to emulate creativity. Portraits were the best way the group thought it could achieve its goal, compared to other works of art such as landscapes and nudes, based on past attempts.

The difference in the artwork is not discernable to the AI solution, but it is obvious to the human eye.

Its painting is of a fictional character, named Edmond Belamy by the collective. But many of his features are indistinguishable and parts of the canvas are blank.

At the bottom right hand corner, like most other famous works of art, is "the artist's" signature, a mathematic equation.

$$\min_G \max_D \mathbb{E}_x[\log D(x)] + \mathbb{E}_z[\log(1 - D(G(z)))]$$

Obvious' GAD signature. Image credit: Obvious

Obvious believes that the author of the portrait would be the algorithm, since it was the one that created the image.

The piece will go up for auction during Christie's Prints and Multiples sale on Oct. 23 to 25.

Luxury and AI

While artificial intelligence has been thought of as computerized solution lacking creativity, a report from Fashionbi explains that AI-powered creativity will be a new frontier for fashion.

Through the use of data, fashion brands are now looking into creative solutions that build a unique strategy for streamlining trends as well as personalization. AI is now also powering three facets of fashion, according to

Fashionbi's Artificial Intelligence in Retail report, such as customer service, product design and within the shopping experience ([see story](#)).

Artificial intelligence is poised to play a much larger role in the retail and marketing worlds soon with its market value projected to reach \$105.8 billion in the next seven years.

According to a report from Tractica, artificial intelligence will become increasingly relevant over the next few years with a significant number of major retailers and advertisers making use of the technology. For luxury brands, AI can help them create the type of personalized experience that consumers expect ([see story](#)).

"All creativity, the creation of new ideas, physical art, music, film, poetry, architecture, start-ups, football plays, new products, advertising, etc. will always be the domain of the greatest computer ever created: the human mind," Tractica's Mr. Beccue said. "It is important in the sense that it is a distraction as to what AI can be used for and sows seeds of confusion as to where it is best applied."

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