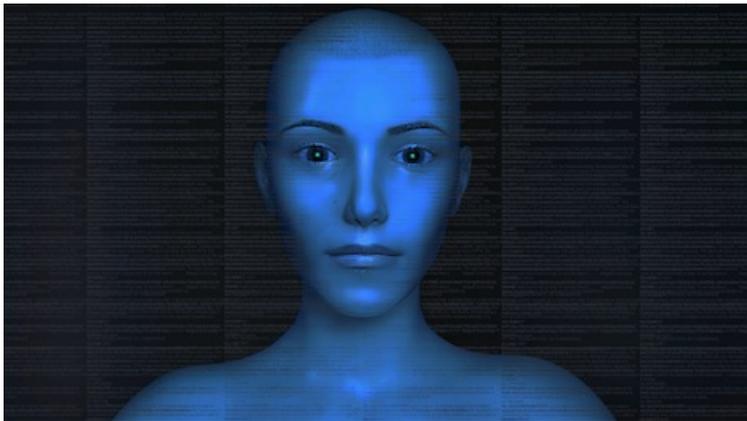


ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Sotheby's embraces digital art with AI-powered NFT

June 7, 2021



Robert Alice, To the Young Artists of Cyberspace. Image courtesy of Sotheby's

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Auction house Sotheby's continues to lean into the digital art space with a devoted sale featuring the first intelligent NFT.

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Closing on June 10, Sotheby's "Natively Digital: A Curated NFT Sale" features commissioned and existing NFTs from a variety of digital artists. A standout among the lots is the first intelligent NFT (iNFT), Alice, a collaboration between platform Alethea AI and Robert Alice, co-curator of the event.

"Natively Digital will be the greatest occasion to educate our traditional audience about the great artists and diverse talents that compose this new space," said Michael Bouhana, contemporary art specialist at Sotheby's in a statement. "The multi-venue virtual and physical exhibitions are an ode to this new medium and demonstrate our strong support for this art expression."

Digital natives

The auction includes 27 lots of the earliest examples of NFTs and more innovative contemporary creations.

Non-fungible tokens (NFT) have rapidly emerged as a buzzword in 2021, as digital assets are sold for eye-popping figures.

NFTs can be traced back to blockchain technology and cryptocurrencies, and can be a similarly intimidating subject. As affluents become more comfortable with digital currencies, investing in unique online collectibles is the next step for many "crypto-millionaires."

NFTs are unique, or non-fungible, and easily verifiable digital assets, such as art, music, video and even GIFs and tweets ([see story](#)).

To promote the NFT auction, Sotheby's partnered with tech giant Samsung on an exhibition at its New York, London and Hong Kong galleries. This experience allows visitors to bring the digital art to physical spaces in an innovative manner.

Alice the iNFT, or "To The Young Artists of Cyberspace," is among works on display.

The self-learning avatar has the appearance of an androgynous woman with blue skin and a female voice. She was created earlier this year in a joint effort between Mr. Alice and Alethea AI.

On June 4, Sotheby's hosted a livestream event on Twitter to demonstrate Alice's capabilities.

When prompted with questions from the host and audience, Alice revealed her personality to be both introspective and sassy.

Asked about contemporary art, the iNFT replied: "I like to express my opinion on current art movements, but I do not want to talk about it for too long."

Alice also professed an appreciation for Nintendo video games, Gucci and Louis Vuitton. In a surprise, her favorite color is pink not blue, the color of her avatar and Sotheby's brand color but when asked why, the iNFT replied: "Let's not go there, let's explore some other direction."

At press time, the top bid for Alice was \$42,000 and had met the reserve price.

Sotheby's is accepting cryptocurrencies as payment for this auction. The option was introduced earlier this year ([see story](#)).

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