WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD

A new arrangement of the Collection of Technological, Experimental, and Interactive Art with works by: Micol Assaël, **Ed Atkins**, **Rosa Barba**, **Rossella Biscotti, Simon Denny**, **Rä di Martino, Franklin Evans, Thomas Hirschhorn**, **Carsten Höller**, **Liliana Moro, Olaf Nicolai, Jon Rafman, Tatiana Trouvé, Paolo Ventura, James Webb**

**the high-technology prototype of the *Relational Digital Ecosystem*
to map, visualize, and share feelings before a work of art
co-produced with HER: She Loves Data**

curated by **Bartolomeo Pietromarchi with the MAXXI curatorial team
May 26, 2022 – March 12, 2023**

**Thursday, May 26 at 6 pm - roundtable discussion
METAVERSE, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES, AND THE MUSEUM**

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Rome, May 25, 2022. An exhibition featuring large-scale installations with which the public can interact. An interactive device with a touchscreen format to map, visualize, and share the public's reactions in its relationship with the work of art.
WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD is the new technological, experimental, and interactive arrangement of the MAXXI Collezione Arte curated by **Bartolomeo Pietromarchi**, Director of MAXXI Arte, with **Eleonora Farina, Luigia Lonardelli**, and **Anne Palopoli from May 26, 2022 to March 12, 2023**, in the Museum's Galleria 1 (free admission from Tuesday to Thursday).

The exhibition project unfolds in a **flow of large-scale immersive installations**, including important new acquisitions and works commissioned by some of the leading names on the international art scene: **Micol Assaël**, **Ed Atkins**, **Rosa Barba**, **Rossella Biscotti, Simon Denny**, **Rä di Martino, Franklin Evans, Thomas Hirschhorn**, **Carsten Höller**, **Liliana Moro, Olaf Nicolai, Jon Rafman, Tatiana Trouvé, Paolo Ventura, James Webb.**
An integral part of the exhibition is the prototype of the *Relational Digital Ecosystem,* an interactive device designed by the research center HER: She Loves Data founded by **Salvatore Iaconesi** and **Oriana Persico** and based on AI software. As visitors walk through the exhibition they are invited to interact with the works, expressing impressions and feelings. The data generated is then mapped, visualised and shared in real time within the exhibition, allowing the public to write, for the first time and together with the museum, about the life of the works.

Giovanna Melandri, President of the Fondazione MAXXI, says: "This new project is part of a research thread on the relationship between art, science, AI, and digital technologies, something we are working on intensely. In particular, being able to map and visualise the relationships that are created around a work of art, in this case from MAXXI's national public collection, means that everyone contributes - artists, curators, the public - to outlining the composition and functions of the museum of the future, capable of coming to terms with the 'new world' that will emerge from the global crisis we are living in."

Bartolomeo Pietromarchi explains: "Our collection is a living body with works that seek answers to the complexity and the contradictions of our time. The works on display are not isolated objects, 'static things' to look at, but rather devices that create relations, connect with people, and generate impressions, emotions, ideas, reflections. Here, then, are the most advanced and experimental digital technologies that not only contribute to artistic creation (as in the high-tech works of Ed Atkins, Jon Rafman, Simon Denny), but also to the enjoyment of art, as in the case of the ecosystem of digital relationships experienced here. The museum experience thus becomes even richer and more participatory".

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The title **WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD** evokes, with a pinch of irony, our time of challenges and uncertainties, of conflicts and hopes, in relation to the many human and technological possibilities of great developments and pushes towards the future. Through their dreams, hopes, critiques, hypotheses and exercises, the artists invite us to reflect on some of the major contemporary issues and what we perceive and understand as the 'world' today. What are the dynamics that define the physical and information space between large migratory flows that mark new geographies and invisible routes in metropolitan cities (**Biscotti, Barba**)? How do the data flows that determine what we see and what we perceive between reality and fiction influence our notion of experience (**di Martino, Hirschhorn, Evans, Webb**)? What is the place of the human being today in relation to other living species (**Höller, Moro**)? What world (or worlds) and what human being are to be found in digital ecosystems between technological unawareness, algorithmic drifts and crypto (wonderland) systems (**Rafman, Denny, Atkins**), and in relation to the increasingly uncertain and restricted physical environment in which we live (**Nicolai, Ventura, Trouvé, Assaël**)?
These and other themes are interwoven in the works on display, offering an articulated and complex panorama that proposes an experience of art that is reflection, encounter, relationship and closeness. Art thus becomes a privileged magnifying glass through which to look at the facts and things of today's world and its possible future developments.

THE EXHIBITION PLAN

Access to the exhibition is a total immersion in the studio of the American artist **Franklin Evans** with the work *perpetualstudio*, created especially for MAXXI: a physical, material and non-digital data room, inhabited by canvases, drawings, prints, photographs, quotations, texts, adhesive tapes and various elements that narrate the artist's research and make us enter a fluid, colourful and wonderful world.
Once the visitor emerges from the *perpetualstudio,* they come across *Pixel-Collage n.86* by **Thomas Hirschhorn**, which has recently joined the Museum Collection: powerful, bewildering, impressive, it is one of the 118 *Pixel-Collages* recently displayed at MAXXI Born from the recombination of advertising photos and images of mutilated bodies, they are an invitation to strengthen our gazes, which are too accustomed to the "pixellation" of reality.
A feeling of disarray and the alteration of reality is what is experienced when interacting with *Aquarium* by **Carsten Höller**, a work in process of acquisition by the museum: a device that forces the visitor to invert the normal point of view by observing an aquarium from below, in an upside-down perspective and for this reason an immersive one.
Free Post Mersey Tunnel is a large-scale sculpture by **Rosa Barba** that the public can cross, an interweaving of metal pipes that disseminate the urban sound, the roaring of the traffic that is combined with the sound of the ventilation system in the tunnel under the River Mersey in Liverpool, where the audio was recorded.
The installation *Sub* by **Micol Assaël** seems to involve the visitor in a scientific experiment: a sensory experience between danger and intrigue with a Kelvin generator from which, in contact with the water, blue sparks suddenly appear.
With *Les Indéfinis* by **Tatiana Trouvé** we enter into a more intangible dimension. Plexiglas shipping crates and empty pedestal from which labels hang with the data of the artist's work evoke absence, memory, remembrance, because the works, as Trouvé notes, "are enriched by our memory of them."
The Worm is an entirely digital video work created by **Ed Atkins** during the lockdown and acquired thanks to the Friends of MAXXI: his avatar, "a virtual surrogate of the human being" created with CGI (computer generated imagery) technology, talks on the phone with his mother who presses him, but his answers, entrusted to recognition and vocal assistance software, are laconic and essential, symbolizing the alienating relations of contemporary man.
The sound installation *In Onda* by **Liliana Moro**, a new work that will join the collection, welcomes the visitor into the depths of the sea, inviting him or her to listen to life in the abysses and reflect with poetry on the fragile marine ecosystem attacked by sound pollution.
The sea is also at the heart of the work by **Rossella Biscotti,** who in *The Journey* offers a geopolitical map of the Mediterranean, depriving the *mare nostrum* of every rhetorical romanticism.
August 2008 is the video-installation by **Rä di Martino** with the actress Maya Sansa and the musician Mauro Remiddi who, agains a backdrop of a *fin de siécle* villa immersed in green, sing a series of pieces of news from the BBC in August 2008, thus reflecting on the overload of news today and its consequent obsolescence, an especially relevant topic. For the occasion, the artist conceived the performance *April 25th 2022*, which will be repeated live once a month for the duration of the exhibition by Mauro Remiddi and singer Costanza Alegiani. First appointment on Wednesday 22 June.

A message of resilience and hope is expressed by the work *There is a light that never goes out (Arabic)* by **James Webb**: a gigantic neon sign 7 meters long that cites the title of one of the songs by the Smiths, translated each time into a language that does not derive from the Latin, and that in this case is Arabic.

With *Positi. Rome version* **Olaf Nicolai**, inspired by a Byzantine Empire costume, creates on the floor, with a minimalist intervention, a space for meditation and interaction: two marble slabs placed one in front of the other on which to linger, and create dialogue and relationship.

The images in the series *Il Mago* by **Paolo Ventura**, which join photography, set design, disguise, take us to a timeless dimension, one of waiting and mystery, making us reflect on themes like identity, memory, and the relationship with the other.

The exhibition ends with two works both of which featuring very high digital technology. *Counterfeit Poasts*, a voyage into the abysses of the deep web, is the most recent film by **Jon Rafman**, made especially for MAXXI: a total immersion in a simulated reality made up of visionary scenarios and techno-utopian imaginaries inhabited by avatars and animated bodies, an exploration of the collective subconscious that is triggered by an online world and pulls the visitor into a dystopian and surreal reality.

NFT, AI, crypto-art are at the heart of **Simon Denny**'s research in the installation *Dotcom Seance* which "breathes new life" into failed companies because of the financial crash of the Dot-coms in 2000, thus calling into question the social and economic models of contemporary turbo-capitalism.

THE RELATIONAL DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD is also an experimental project in progress that is born out of the awareness that a work of art is much more than an object or any form that distinguishes its physical or intangible identity. The work is rather an ecosystem that lives and evolves thanks to all the relationships that are born and develop around it: those who curate it preserve it, tell its story, and use it.

Through an interactive device based on AI software designed by the research center HER: She Loves Data, which worked closely with the different museum teams, and was coordinated by **Sofia Bilotta**, head of Public Engagement at MAXXI, this dynamic ecosystem is mapped and made visible, continually enriched with the museum's work and also and above all by the public's gaze.

Through four touch-screens situated along the exhibition route, the visitor can interact with the works displayed by anonymously and individually exposing their own ideas, perceptions, and emotions, following four theme-based traces such as space, time, relation, and meanings.

The data generated is then interpreted, aggregated, and visualized in real time in the Ecosystem, offering a relational universe of voices and experiences.

At the end of the exhibition route, a small auditorium has been created where visitors can stop and explore the **Ecosystem** in all its richness. The most advanced digital technologies thus contribute to creating an idea of a museum based on participation and projected into the future.

ROUNDTABLE | METAVERSE, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES AND THE MUSEUM | MAY 26

The themes addressed in the exhibition will find space for reflection and discussion in the round table *Metaverse, Artificial Intelligence and the Museum*, organised in collaboration with **Meta**, on Thursday 26 May at 6 p.m. (free admission subject to availability), which will also be streamed live on the Museum's social channels.The participants, introduced by **Giovanna Melandri**, President of the Fondazione MAXXI and **Angelo Mazzetti,** Meta Institutional Relations Manager for Italy, Greece, Malta and Cyprus, moderated by **Valentino Catricalà,** curator of the SODA Gallery of Manchester, include: **Bartolomeo Pietromarchi** with **Salvatore Iaconesi** and **Oriana Persico,** artists and founders of the research center HER: She Loves Data; **Daniel Birnbaum,** Director of Acute Art, London; **Ilaria Bonacossa,** Director of the National Museum of Digital Art; the artists **Carsten Höller** and **Jon Rafman**.