

# Examining Portraits in Digital Fashion Art Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) through Baudrillard's Simulation

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## Abstract

Web 3.0 enables people and machines to connect, evolve, share, and use knowledge on an unprecedented scale and in new ways, drastically improving our Internet experience. The metaverse is a collective, virtual shared space supporting all digital activities. Prompted by the rapid growth of digital art and digital fashion, this theoretical analysis explores using Jean Baudrillard's simulation concept to create unique digital art non-fungible tokens (NFTs), allowing them to express and communicate ideas like real-world art. Specifically, this study analyzes 120 digital fashion portraits of humans and animals and classifies them under three types of simulacra covering four stages of Baudrillard's simulation process. The result shows that NFT fashion artworks reflect the core features of a digital reality by connecting and transcending the boundaries of cultures, genders, and nationalities. However, in the final simulation stage (the fourth step), the simulacrum can only coexist in the virtual world as a hyperreal object (the Type III of simulacrum): an object more real than reality.

**Key words:** Non-fungible token (NFT), Jean Baudrillard, Simulation perspective, Simulacrum, Digital fashion art

## I. Introduction

Web 3.0 enhances the Internet experience, enabling humans and machines to connect, evolve, share, and use knowledge on an unprecedented scale (Almeida et al., 2014) and has heralded the expansion of virtual worlds, such as digital twins (Gelernter, 1991). The metaverse is a collective virtual shared space built using technologies such as augmented reality and the internet, which allows people to perform all types of digital activities. This concept has emerged over the past few decades and is becoming a reality, with the rapid development of blockchain. Blockchain provides an ideal decentralised environment by building a virtual online world based on trust. Users in blockchain-based alternative reality will be able to experience dif-

ferent types of exciting uses or activities, such as playing games, exhibiting self-made art, and trading assets and virtual assets (art, land parcels, names, video shots, wearables). Users will also be offered new opportunities to profit from the virtual economy (Wang et al., 2021).

Blockchain technology is a radical innovation with implications and potential challenges for provenance tracking and establishing authenticity (Beck & Müller-Bloch, 2017). Blockchain technology allows any user to create and deploy programs on a shared global infrastructure (Buterin, 2014; Wood, 2014). The creation of non-fungible token (NFT) assets is now on the edge of mainstream technological implementation. NFTs will help introduce a concept of digital personal property that can coexist alongside intellectual property interests. A personal property interest in a digital asset must be particularly clear and distinct to avoid

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being subordinated to intellectual property interests (Perzanowski & Schultz, 2015). A typical example is digital games, in which players own unique items that they acquire when playing the game, instead of licensing them (Fairfield, 2022). As gaming and digital fashion come to the fore, NFTs are expected to be increasingly involved in fashion as well. For instance, Gucci sold an NFT video, 'Aria', from its Fall 2021 collection, in partnership with the auction house Christie's, and in the spring of 2022 minted NFTs via Opensea. Fashion companies are showing an interest in the NFT market because fashion products are sensitive to unauthorised reproduction. This weakness can be overcome through the uniqueness of NFTs.

Digital fashion art is like a mirror that reflects reality, and it shows hyperreality as a new reality, which is both similar to and different from the everyday reality. Baudrillard (2019) contended that it is impossible to distinguish between the representation and the real in a digital society, that is, the 'sign' and the real 'thing' in reality, when the sign refers to the referent. Disneyland provides a paradigmatic illustration of Baudrillard's simulacrum (simulacra). Another example is William Gibson, who is sometimes referred to as the godfather or 'noir prophet' of Cyberpunk. Gibson is not an academic scholar in the traditional sense. However, his visionary writing on the techno worlds of the near future has earned him the status of a social and cultural theorist for many, in addition to winning him a string of literary awards.

Digital art NFTs are artworks that are created using digital technology, and differ vastly from any existing art system. Hence, there have been many sceptical views about its meaning and implication. However, in the current era, the expansion of research into the virtual world is a foregone conclusion, and systematic research on digital art NFTs is urgently needed. In particular, the value and aesthetic analysis of digital fashion art NFTs, which are created by combining fashion and NFT art, will enable digital fashion art NFTs to be established as a new art field in the future. To date, academic research aimed at establishing digital fashion art NFTs as a new field of digital art has been

insufficient. Moreover, considering the future potential of the NFT market (granting ownership of uniqueness and creativity), no academic works have focused on digital art NFTs as a part of digital art. Therefore, research that can help systematize digital fashion art NFTs is necessary.

To address the aforementioned gaps, this study discusses Baudrillard's simulation process as a way of creating digital fashion art NFTs that can express and communicate like real-world art. By applying Baudrillard's concept to analyse NFT artworks featuring digital portraits of humans and animals, this study aims to derive the characteristics of digital fashion art NFTs to provide directions for designers to access the NFT market for producing more digital fashion art in the future.

## II. Literature Review

### 1. Digital Media, Art, and Fashion

Given the advantages of digital media, fashion shows are increasingly expected to incorporate new digital image technologies to communicate more interactively with the audience (Hong & Kim, 2014). Digital art refers to any artwork or practice that uses digital technology as part of the creative or presentation process. It can also refer to computer art that uses and engages with digital media (Paul, 2016). In the 1990s and the early-21st century, digital media continued to advance at an unprecedented rate. The 1960s was the most important decade in the history of digital technology, laying the foundation for many of today's technologies and artistic endeavours. In 1961, Theodore Nelson coined the words 'hypertext' and 'hypermedia' to describe a space in which text, images, and sound were electronically interconnected and networked (Drucker, 2013; Paul, 2023). What we now call digital art has gone through several name changes since it first emerged. Once called 'computer art', 'multimedia art', and 'cyber art' (1960s–1990s), the term 'new media art' was introduced in the late-20th century and was used primarily for film and vid-

eo, sound art, and other hybrid forms. Many of the other concepts explored in digital art have their roots in various 'traditional' arts that preceded it. Digital art also did not develop in an art historical vacuum, but is closely related to previous art movements such as Dada, Fluxus, and Conceptual art. Digital art emphasizes formal guidelines, and concepts, events, and audience participation, rather than unified material objects as its core (Colson, 2007; Lieser et al., 2009; Paul, 2023).

The development of multimedia has dulled modern people's responses to media, resulting in a demand for more stimulating and realistic media. In order to stimulate the visual sensitivity and enhance the memory of consumers who have become accustomed to such multimedia, expression techniques using photographic images are becoming more important. However, given the nature of the medium, photographic images have a limited potential to represent real time and space. Moreover, as photographs represent the three-dimensional spaces as a two-dimensional plane, they inevitably distort real space and reduce time. This has distanced photographic images from the development of diversified media as a form of visual expression. The digital portrait technique overcomes the limitations of these media by introducing multidimensional space-time and hyper-reality into photographic images. Furthermore, it is increasingly being utilized as an active means of visual communication through the effective use of Photoshop. Digital portraits may be more like a fantasy than a reality, as they are created by staged actions in a space based on a real space. However, this technique also reflects the uniformity of modern life through digital images that replicate the confusing, unclear, and uniform identity of modern people (Kim, 2005).

Fashion is also using digital art as a medium to deliver various messages to customers through fashion films, fashion videos, and virtual fashion shows. In recent years, fashion shows have become a way to communicate with audiences. In fact, some fashion shows have even replaced the traditional elements of a fashion show, such as models, stage, clothes, music, and

audience, with digital images to create stage backdrops or fantastic stage effects.

Fashion digital visuals, such as interactive videos, extend the presentation of the fashion show into the virtual space, inviting the audience to actively participate in the fashion shows in real time. Internet-only digital fashion shows are also being organized, in which digital images are the centre pieces of the show. Because the Internet is not limited by time and space, it allows for multifaceted communication between the audience and fashion designers, and among the audience members themselves. It also has the advantage of attracting a larger audience than traditional fashion shows.

## **2. Baudrillard's Simulacra and Simulation and its Application in Digital Art**

Baudrillard (1981/1994) dealt with postmodern theories in his book *Simulacra and Simulations*, which was first published in French in 1981. He mentioned that the postmodern culture is characterised by the endless mass reproduction of copies through media and other forms of simulations. In *Simulacra and Simulations*, Baudrillard offered a solution to this problem of mass reproduction. He dealt with indirect truth, objectivity, and authenticity through the analysis of the myths and realities of origins. The expansion of the true and the living experience is the 'simulacrum', which can be resurrected in the form of disappearance of the object and substance. A newly born simulation is produced as a panicked form that has lost its reference and the meaning of reality. Its act of feigning or dissimulation leaves the reality principle intact. Its difference is certainly clear; reality is only masked. In contrast, a 'simulation' threatens to obscure the difference between 'true' and 'false', between 'real' and 'imaginary' (Baudrillard, 1981/1994). It involves an escalation of the true, of the lived experience, or a resurrection of the figurative, wherein the object and substance have disappeared. Furthermore, it is a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential (Baudrillard, 1981/1994). In other words, a simula-

crum is a copy that depicts something that did not initially exist or that no longer has an original. At the same time, a simulation mimics the behaviour of a real process or system over time.

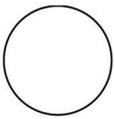
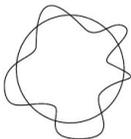
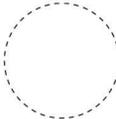
Things that are supposedly original, such as ‘substance’ and ‘essence’, are the subjective historical products of society. That is, they start from the principle that the sign and the signified are the same. However, when considering the simulation, it is more important to start the simulation with a reflective and sceptical view of the original, rather than assessing the question of ‘falseness’, because simulation is not the opposite of representation. A simulation begins with this utopia of equivalence, the fundamental negation of the sign as value, and the sign of the return of all references. Thus, the simulated representation absorbs the simulation by interpreting it as a false representation, whereas the simulation encloses the entire representation itself as mimetic (Baudrillard, 1981/1994, 2016).

First, simulation implies a theology of truth and secrecy (to which the notion of ideology also belongs).

Second, this theology of truth and secrecy inaugurates an age of simulacra and simulation, in which there is no longer any God to recognise as one's own, nor any last judgement to separate truth from false, or the real from its artificial resurrection, as everything is already dead and risen in advance. When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning (Baudrillard, 2016). Thus, simulation appears as a strategy of the real, neo-real, and hyperreal, whose universal double is a strategy of deterrence (Baudrillard, 1994). The transition from signs that dissimulate something to signs that dissimulate that there is nothing marks a decisive turning point. The notion of ‘fake’ requires a reflection on reality. All the work of changing, turning, and twisting reality is counterfactual thought, that is, ‘false’. However, this lie is not the opposite of reality, but can be made into reality through insight, a search for the background of reality, and a quest to find an escape from reality.

As shown in <Table 1>, Baudrillard (1981/1994, 2016) described the simulation process as four successive stages of the image. In the first stage, the image is

**Table 1. The order divided into four stages of simulation by Baudrillard with signifier and signified**

Signifier = Signified		Signifier ≠ Signified	
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
It is the reflection of a profound reality	It masks and denatures a profound reality	It masks the absence of a profound reality	It has no reaction to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reflection of deep realism</li> <li>▪ Reproduction of reality</li> <li>▪ Origin and signs of reality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Deformation of the origin</li> <li>▪ Modification of reality</li> <li>▪ Origin and signs of second-hand truth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Original image in human imagination (the origin disappears)</li> <li>▪ Absence of realism and objectivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Image unrelated to the origin</li> <li>▪ Absence of an object authenticity</li> </ul>
			
			

a good appearance, or a representation of the sacramental order, which reflects a profound reality. In the second, it is an evil appearance, representing a maleficent order that masks and denatures a profound reality. In the third, it plays at being an appearance, belonging to the order of sorcery, and masking the absence of a profound reality. In the fourth, it is no longer of the order of appearances and bears no relation to any reality whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum.

Yim (2006) applied Baudrillard's simulation process, which ends in the creation of pure simulacrum (simulacra), to postmodern fashion design: an expression of non-representational fashion that does not mimic the human body. As shown in <Table 1>, as the real object is simulated as digital art and developed into an NFT, it progresses from stages 1 and 2, where the original features of the original remain intact, to stages 3 and 4, in which the meaning is transformed, and is born and developed into a new digital form that is completely different from the essence of the initial object.

### 3. Digital fashion art and NFTs

NFTs enable all people, regardless of gender, race, geography, or religion, to have an equal voice. Art NFTs are a digital expression of pop art, such as Crypto punks. As a representative example, Beeple, the most famous digital artist, sold a piece for \$69 million in 2021. Beeple's NFTs, such as <Everyday>, <Birth of a Nation>, and <Disney World 2020>, have established a foundation for digital art NFTs, by connecting with pop culture and re-enacting cyber-horror. Digital art started in the early 1960s as a machine drawing created by Desmond Paul Henry of England using bombsight analogue computers. Henry's drawing machine can be said to be the result of a 'mechanical coincidence' (Allen, 1979). In general, the artwork consists of the artist, who functions as a facilitator of social interactions, not of aesthetic experiences, and emphasizes the temporal dimension of the audience's subjective experiences of time. However, in the context of social interactions, digital has a low dependence on experts such as art institutions that classify

objects as works of art. It is open to the public and induces free participation, but its aesthetic meaning is often overlooked. A representative example is Beeple's <Everyday>, an image that lacks an aesthetic dimension and never takes the observer to the uplifting moment promised by the concept of art as an experience.

Digital art evolves into a form of graffiti art when combined with hip-hop and skating culture. The first digital art NFT appeared in 2014, created by applying the blockchain technology. This marked the beginning of what is called the 'monetized graphic'. Through NFTs, which are permanent and certifiable online records that connect a digital artwork (often called crypto art) to its owner, digital arts have become crypto artworks. Crypto art can be regarded as limited-edition digital art, cryptographically registered with a token on a blockchain (Fairfield, 2022). A digital artwork is a unique work of art that lives online, which anyone can access and indiscriminately create copies of. This limits the authenticity of the digital artwork and makes it difficult to make a limited edition. However, as the notion of NFTs gains traction, the art market is starting to value digital art, and collectors are beginning to collect digital works (Jeong, 2022). NFTs differ from fungible tokens in two important aspects: 1) every NFT is unique and 2) it cannot be divided or merged (Voshmgir, 2018). In addition, for digital art to successfully settle in the NFT market, it should have the following three characteristics: 1) a persuasive story, 2) 'creator's reputation' that can be solved with NFTs, and 3) future value that can be maintained or increased (Vasan et al., 2022). The value of NFT fashion art is that it provides a mechanism for artists to create digital artwork and legitimise the uniqueness, timelessness, and collectability of their work. It also offers collectors the ability to showcase their collections on a digital platform.

## III. Methods

### 1. Data Collection and Analysis

The subject of this analysis was digital fashion art

NFTs that were recently traded on Opensea, the world's best NFT online market. To understand the characteristics of Baudrillard's simulation, we analysed NFTs that were tagged as digital art, using portraits of animals and humans. In order to select NFT artworks that can objectively grasp the four stages of Baudrillard's simulation process, we selected works that were developed by targeting 'specific animals' or 'humans' that can be predicted in the initial stage, and expressed fashion styles including clothes. The study period was from January to February 2022. NFTs made of animal and person portraits, which are well-received by the public with high sales rankings at home and abroad, were targeted. The selection criteria were portrait images excluding video of people or animals wearing clothing and fashion in January-February 2022, the period when NFT art emerged in 2021 and experienced rapid growth and popularity, and works by artists with the highest sales rate and the highest transaction rate of NFTs overseas and domestically. In order to accurately analyse the process of simulation, this study utilized still images. Therefore, the digital fashion art NFTs to be analysed are still works with no movement among the 2D and 3D results, excluding moving video footage. Among them, we selected the top four bestselling NFT groups: 'SuperNormal', 'Women of Metaverse', 'Bored Ape Yacht Club', and 'Meta Kongz'.

'SuperNormal' (South Korea) and 'Woman of the Metaverse' (United Kingdom) are two of the most prominent projects that utilized human portraits to create NFT art during the rapid growth of NFT art from late 2021 to 2022. Created on 25 January 2022, the total sales volume for SuperNormal was \$166.25. The average SuperNormal NFT price was \$166.3. Women of the Metaverse sold for around £430,000 (2022, October 11).

'Bored Ape Yacht Club' (USA), and 'Meta Kongz' (South Korea) are two of the best-selling works of art during the rapid growth of NFT art from late 2021 to 2022. They translated animal portraits into NFT art. The 'Borrowed Again Yacht Club' collection has approximately 11,000 unique owners since its launch. At

the time of publication, it sold for approximately \$344,000 (4 January 2022). Fashion companies such as Adidas have also purchased Borrowed Again Yacht Club (September 2021). Meta Kongz's (KONGZ) price floor today is \$3,101.93, with a 24-hour sales volume of 0 Klay. As of 20 January 2023, a total of 282 NFTs have been minted, which a total volume of 4,871.054 ETH.

The art fashion NFTs chosen by this study are non-visual works that embody a variety of fashion stylizations, excluding LEGO blocks or puzzle pieces, and are limited to those whose digital processes can be read objectively. In this study, we randomly selected 50 artworks sold through Opensea from February to May 2022. Among them, we selected 30 representative artworks per artist to analyse Baudrillard's simulation process in a total of 120 digital artworks. To objectively analyse and categorize each of the 30 NFT artworks (120 in total) into Baudrillard's simulation steps, three fashion experts with doctoral degrees or higher, who have expertise in the transformation process of digital artworks were recruited and asked to conduct two cross-validations.

## 2. Types of Simulacra in the Baudrillard's Simulation Procedure

In this study, three fashion experts applied Baudrillard's framework of simulation to analyse the characteristics of 120 digital art NFTs. Subsequently, based on interviews with the artists and articles about the production process, they categorised the artworks into three types of simulacra. Considering Baudrillard's ideas on the dual representation gap between the world as we know it and the digital world, and the simulation strategies of the real, neo-real, and hyperreal, the fashion experts participating in the study evaluation categorised each type of simulacra into low (type I), medium (type II), or high (type III) level-simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1981/1994). <Table 2> presents the categorization.

These simulations exist to trick us into thinking that an identifiable reality exists. Each of the three types of

**Table 2. The order and type of simulacrum in simulation strategy**

The type of Simulacrum	The contents according to the orders	Simulation strategy
Type I	1 <sup>st</sup> order: This is the realm of the automaton.	Real
Type II	2 <sup>nd</sup> order: This is the level of the robot-like appearance.	Neo-Real
Type III	3 <sup>rd</sup> order: This is the level of the clone.	Hyperreal

simulacra can be examined as follows. Type I includes a simulacrum that focuses on forgeries and fake images, where the digital output is still in the first stage of digital transformation among the four stages of Baudrillard's simulation. In this case, the symbol no longer refers to the object to be referenced, but rather to the signified and produced. At this level, the symbol no longer has an obligatory meaning; instead, symbols become more important than physical ones. In other words, the focus is on the symbol rather than what it represents. This is the realm of the automaton, the obvious fake that plays with reality.

Type II corresponds to the stage in which the digital output derived from the Baudrillard simulation process becomes a false image and is created in a form that does not actually exist. Type II is considered to be the second type of simulacrum, where the simulation is more exaggerated than in Type I. At this level, the symbols begin to repeat and make individuals the same. The sign does not refer to the real, but to the distinction between the represented signified. The second type can be interpreted not as the emergence of a new clone, but as a partial morphological transformation of the original, which distorts its realism. This simulacrum adopts a robot-like appearance, which is more realistic than a typical machine, but is not completely human.

Type III simulacrum is characterised as a 'new species', formed at the end of Baudrillard's four stimulation stages. Not only does it represent a new form that never existed, but also the meaning conveyed by that form bears no relation to the original. Type III digital artifacts are the most profound digital artifacts and are evaluated as completely different from the original.

This order represents the ultimate collapse between reality and imagination, wherein we can no longer tell the difference between real and simulated. The third order is not the human level; it is the clone level, a surreal variant. The simulation is dead.

## IV . Results

### 1. Portraits of Humans, 'Women of Metaverse' and 'SuperNormal'

NFTs play an important part in establishing digital personal property. They are sold with ownership rights that resemble real-world ownership. Thus, these rights determine the conditions for their usage, prevents others from using them, and allows creators to profit from resale or even destroy them (Fairfield, 2022). In addition, the NFT artwork itself mirrors the real world. Portraits of humans reflect more realism than portraits of animals. In particular, 'Women of Metaverse' most resembled real females, in the first and second stages of Baudrillard's simulation. After the analysis, the following images were selected as 3–4 representative images for each design category in cases where the artist's work is similar. The overall artwork for 'Women of Metaverse' had similar proportions of simulacra Type I (48%) and II (52%), with no new clones of Type III appearing (Table 3).

The characteristics of each type of simulacrum produced by 'Women of Metaverse' are as follows. Type I depicts the life of a female character. It concentrates on emotions such as kindness and warmth, on the innate femininity of women, and captures the essential aspects of being woman, such as pregnancy and

**Table 3. The types of simulacra in Women in the Metaverse**

Types	Simulation strategy	Images	Rates 100% (30 pieces in total)
Type I	Real		47% (14)
Type II	Neo-real		53% (16)

child-rearing. ‘Women of Metaverse’ reflects a deep realism, across various phases of women’s lives. Most of these works depict the reality of mothers and their lives. It illustrates the origin and signs of the feminine, maternal love, and humanity. Under Type I, another artwork by ‘Women in Metaverse’ demonstrates the effect of more illustrations, expanding and maximising the effect of femininity and/or maternal love, by transforming the original signifier to an indirect truth. Their founders are among the many women who are on a mission to incorporate inclusiveness into the space, making entry points more accessible and less daunting for the crypto-curious.

The artworks of ‘Women of Metaverse’ under Type II feature women with crowns placed on their heads and a halo radiating outward, reminiscent of Mary, the mother of Jesus, or the most beautiful woman in a beauty pageant. The women with the halo represent a variety of races and age groups. However, notably, the crown or halo over the women’s heads indicates a morphological resemblance to the Virgin Mary but does not convey the meaning that she embodies. It is only used as an aesthetic element to portray each woman. In addition, the symbol of the crown invites multiples interpretations and its meaning can change depending on the perspective of the audience viewing the work. Type II images also take the form of abstract paintings, thus blurring the distinction between the background

and the costume. However, none of the works of ‘Women in the Metaverse’ could be categorised under Type III. This could be because the creators of ‘Women in the Metaverse’ are more focused on developing digital works that reflect the real world.

Meanwhile, ‘SuperNormal’ demonstrates more stages of the simulation process. ‘SuperNormal’ is an NFT artwork from Zipcy; the term means exceeding or beyond the normal. Zipcy has always explored the ‘aesthetics of boundaries’. Their works blur the boundaries between eroticism and affection, and desire and hunger. ‘SuperNormal’ has the highest proportion of Type I artworks at 57%, followed by Type II at 26%, and Type III at 17% (Table 4).

The characteristics of each type are as follows. Under Type I, ‘SuperNormal’ portrays stylised images of humans depicted as changing the reality of reality. These works attempt to go beyond the characteristics of the original image in terms of their representation of people from various countries and genders. In the second stage, ‘SuperNormal’ modifies the reality and shows a sign of a second-hand truth by portraying multiple boundaries such as that of digital/analogue, sexuality and race, and normal/abnormal. Thus, these images represent second stage of Baudrillard’s simulation, that is, masking or altering the ‘reality of reality’.

Type II borrows the image of a robot from the human imagination. Thus, the original source of the im-

Table 4. The types of simulacra in SuperNormal

Types	Simulation strategy	Images	Rates 100% (30 pieces in total)
Type I	Real		57% (17)
Type II	Neo-real		26% (8)
Type III	Hyperreal		17% (5)

age (i.e., humans) is lost and lacks realistic quality. Artworks under this type can be interpreted as a partial morphological transformation of the original, not the emergence of a new clone. Thus, an eccentric style, scorned by ordinary people earlier, becomes the new 'normal' or becomes trendy. The minority becomes the majority, and something that never happened before becomes conventional. Thus, by adopting various styles and racial features, Zipcy's NFT artworks show that people are equally connected (through fake reality) to each other beyond cultures, genders, and nationalities. Accordingly, they demonstrate the potential of digital reality, which allows people to coexist in the virtual world.

Under Type III, 'SuperNormal' appeared as a new cloned character with ambiguous gender and racial features, as the project was developed through the integration of generative AI. Zipcy aimed to offer choices to AI, who, unlike herself, is unaware of the current standard of 'normality' and is supposed to lack prejudices. Thus, it is expected to combine all elements, free from any boundaries. The integration of gen-

erative AI introduced some unusual features, which makes it different from the portraits of humans of 'Women of Metaverse'. For instance, their AI-generated images combined hundreds of clothes, hair, and jewellery that could be applied to each ZIPS item. Therefore, ZIPS can also be mixed with gender and racial characteristics, resulting in new clones irrespective of the cultures, genders, or nationalities that exist in the real world. AI processes all those compositions, creating unexpected results that the artist cannot control or intervene in. The user could meet their ideal, or encounter something beyond their expectations, through these experiences. The unexpectedness is directly related to the unique value of each character.

## 2. Portraits of Animals, 'Bored Ape Yacht Club', and 'Meta Kongz'

In the case of animal portraits, the images were made using pure simulacrum with a new signifier that was completely independent of the original animal. 'Bored Ape Yacht Club' (BAYC) artworks appeared

in all three types of simulacra, demonstrating all four stages Baudrillard's simulation. Etymologically, the word 'ape' originated from the Old English word 'ap'. However, the term has a history of somewhat imprecise, comical, or punitive usage in its native language. Its early meaning generally meant non-human ape primates, as in the cognates of other Germanic languages. Later, after the term 'monkey' was introduced into English, 'monkey' was specificized to refer to primates with tails. BAYC developers Solano and Aronow developed the concept of a shared digital canvas. Anyone who buys it can paint on it. They likened this canvas to a bathroom; this idea persisted in their minds, and they created a science-fiction storyline around it: billionaires who are bored of chasing riches beyond their wildest dreams can get weird playing in the swamp club with a bunch of monkeys. Asian American artist Seneca is the lead designer for the illustrations featured on the Bored Ape NFTs. Seneca explained that she is not the only illustrator of the work, but 'the chief artist of the original collection', and that the monkey's body is an exact match for one of her paintings (Hissong, 2022). The origin story of the BAYC has expanded to include diverse types of apes in their digital art.

The digital work for 'Bored Ape Yacht Club' featured all three types of simulacra, with the third and the first types being the most frequent, at 47% and 40% respectively. The second type, Neo-real, appeared 13% of the time. The characteristics of each type are as follows. In Type I, apes represent the characteristics of real apes; however, they are personified by their costumes. Anthropomorphic animals appeared with the traits and meanings previously exhibited by animals lost. In Type II, images still present the shape of the ape, but its characteristics are replaced by that of a robot and the images no longer represent a monkey. In Type III, the monkeys of the 'Bored Monkey Yacht Club' are born as new clones with pink, ornate marble, or leopard-print skins, in hyperreality. These are no longer the original monkeys. This development illustrates Jones (2022) critique of the Bored Apes NFTs' impact on digital art and argues that these NFTs should put an end to any romanticism about NFT art (Jones, 2022). The last types of images signify boredom, emptiness, devastation, and pride. This signification has emerged as a new feature, because now the ape of BAYC is so rich, he is no longer ferocious or agile (Table 5).

**Table 5. The types of simulacra in Bored Ape Yacht Club**

Types	Simulation strategy	Images	Rates 100% (30 pieces in total)
Type I	Real		40% (12)
Type II	Neo-real		13% (4)
Type III	Hyperreal		47% (14)

'Meta Kongz' artworks feature the gorilla, the largest living primate. Gorillas tend to live in troops, with the leader referred to as a silverback. However, 'Meta Kongz' has a different approach to reality as it randomly generates 3D NFTs with the help of an AI creator. The story of 'Meta Kongz' starts with gorillas at the circus. One day, a poster flew by in front of a yawning gorilla, which depicted a paradise for gorillas. In a white laboratory below the circus, a gorilla is wearing goggles and is assembling a large engine. Within the spiderweb-like sewers beneath the city, the gorillas go looking for mechanical parts instead of going home. They roam the city at night and fill empty envelopes with jewels. In the last jewellery store, they enter a room filled with expensive watches. Now, the gorillas understand the concept of time.

'Meta Kongz' NFT arts under Type III of Baudrillard's simulacrum types create a new clone that utilizes a generative AI algorithm using a hyperreal strategy to transcend, rather than transform or reform the original image (Table 6). Thus, these artworks pursue 'a form without a shape, a form without a form' (Yim, 2006). With its colourful skins of red, grey, and purple, and textile patterns, 'Meta Kongz' showed a new symbolism, different from the existing gorillas. The image becomes its own pure simulacrum in the hyperreal. As these simulacra masquerade as the same reference or symbol, there is no distance between the symbol and the reference, only the surface. 'Meta Kongz', as a new clone with gorillas wearing various accessories from daily objects, such as a white doctor's gown, stethoscope, cryptocurrency, and angel's wings, is born as a new character. It has a different meaning from the orig-

inal gorillas, and its accessories are no longer used as a means of representing actual gorillas.

## V. Discussion

According to Baudrillard's perspective, a human subject may try to understand a non-human object, but an object can only be understood based on what it signifies. This is because the process of signification immediately involves a web of signs other than those from which it can be distinguished, and this never produces the desired results. Therefore, Wolny (2017) argued that a complete understanding of the minutiae of human life is impossible. When people are manoeuvred into thinking otherwise, they become drawn toward a 'simulated' version of reality or, to use one of his neologisms, a state of hyperreality (Wolny, 2017). By analysing digital fashion art based on Baudrillard's simulation process, this study derived the following two characteristics of digital fashion art NFTs.

First, digital fashion art NFTs carry transcendent messages that go beyond the physical world. The fashion items worn by these objects, which broke down the boundaries between people, animals, and machines (robots), as well as national, racial, and gender boundaries in reality, captured human fantasies of a third world, third race. Thus, by adopting the hyperreal strategy, digital fashion presents a digital fantasy and fictional world that is vastly imaginative. An NFT's financial success is also determined, in part, by its visual characteristics, such as the style, design, and content of the artwork, which attracts the interest of collectors with similar artistic tastes. The nodes in many NFTs' creation are very important to unlock the potential of

**Table 6. The types of simulacra in Meta Kongz**

Types	Simulation strategy	Images	Rates 100% (30 pieces in total)
Type III	Hyperreal		100% (30)

NFT art (Vasan et al., 2022). For example, in one of the SuperNormal roadmaps, Fashion Games, the owners of NFT art can create new NFTs by combining any elements they want. Therefore, the unexpectedness or rarity of NFT art directly contributes to the unique value of each character. NFT art born through this process can emerge as a simulation from the fourth stage of the Baudrillard simulation. Its meaning is disconnected from any cultural, general, and national realities.

Second, digital fashion art NFTs manifest the illusion of dematerialized art. The materialisation of aesthetics is accompanied by a desperate attempt to simulate art, to reproduce and combine previous artistic forms and styles and create numerous artistic images and objects. However, this form of eclecticism, which is confused and ambiguous in form, generates a situation in which art is no longer art, in its traditional or modern sense, but is a mere image, artifact, object, simulation, or product. It reintroduces nothing into the heart of the image and turns this emptiness into an event; it represents a substance, or better, a non-substance. It is a total artifice, an awareness that the world is no longer the natural world, but is now a world without any images or imagination. Such art revolves around disillusion and commercial frenzy. Every banality becomes an aesthetic banality; it creates and lives off a maelstrom of representation, in the attempt to infringe the secret inherent in a desire and an object, to make everything clear and visible (Viviani, 2012).

## VI. Conclusions

Recently, NFTs have been playing an important part in the advancement of digital personal property. Their resemblance with real-world personal property is too clear for the courts to ignore. NFTs are sold with clear ownership rights, in order to be used, exclude others from using them, profit from their resale, or to even destroy them (Fairfield, 2022). This has led to the realisation of new concepts designed to simplify human interaction and collaboration on a large scale across several industries, such as supply chain management, international payments, international trade finance, en-

ergy markets, and notary services (Christidis & Devetsikiotis, 2016; Morabito, 2017; Wüst & Gervais, 2018).

This study examines the applicability of Baudrillard's simulation process in the context of digital art NFTs as a way of creating original digital art that can be expressed and communicated ideas like real art. By analysing portraits (human and animal) through the framework of Baudrillard's simulation, this study derived three types of simulacrum that characterize the digitization of NFTs, covering four stages of the simulation process. Based on this, we analysed NFT art and found that in the lower stages of the simulacrum, NFT fashion art depicts the concept of digital reality by creating works that reflect the characteristics of the real world in terms of culture, gender, and nationality, and by projecting the real world to the virtual world without drastically distorting the meaning of the original object. However, digital artworks that have progressed to the third and fourth stages of the simulation are expressed as the Type III simulacrum. These artworks appeared as new fake images that resembled reality but did not actually exist, or as a form in which the economy of nation, culture, and gender conveyed by the original collapsed and a completely different meaning was conveyed. The third type of NFT fashion art, mostly from generative AI work, lacked any sense of purpose or intent and resulted in new clones that were completely devoid of the original meaning.

This study presents the following characteristics of digital fashion art NFTs: first, digital fashion art NFTs are characterized as fashion that conveys transcendental messages that go beyond the boundaries of the real world, and contain fantasies about the third world and the third race. Second, digital fashion art NFTs express the fantasy of dematerialized art.

This study provides insights into NFT digital fashion art from the perspective of the simulation, as theorized by Baudrillard. The results of the simulation of Baudrillard's four-step process allow us to understand NFT digital fashion art and have implications for predicting its future. Future studies could focus on conducting academic analysis of 3D images, video types

with sound, augmented reality and virtual reality created by various digital fashion artists and NFT digital fashion art products of fashion companies.

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