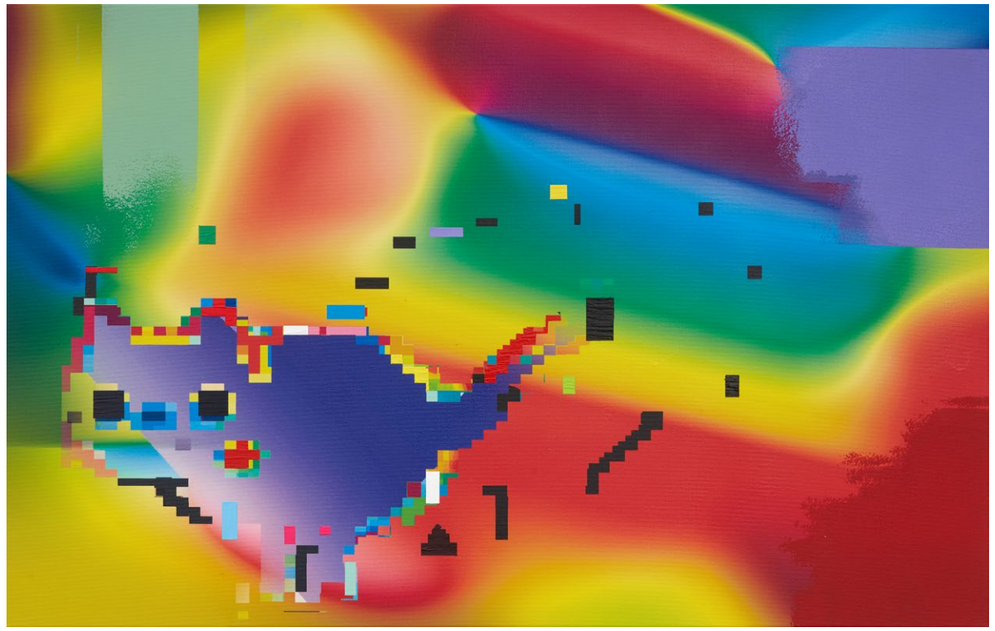
PhilippvonRosenGalerie

Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
September 2 – October 28, 2023

Entry

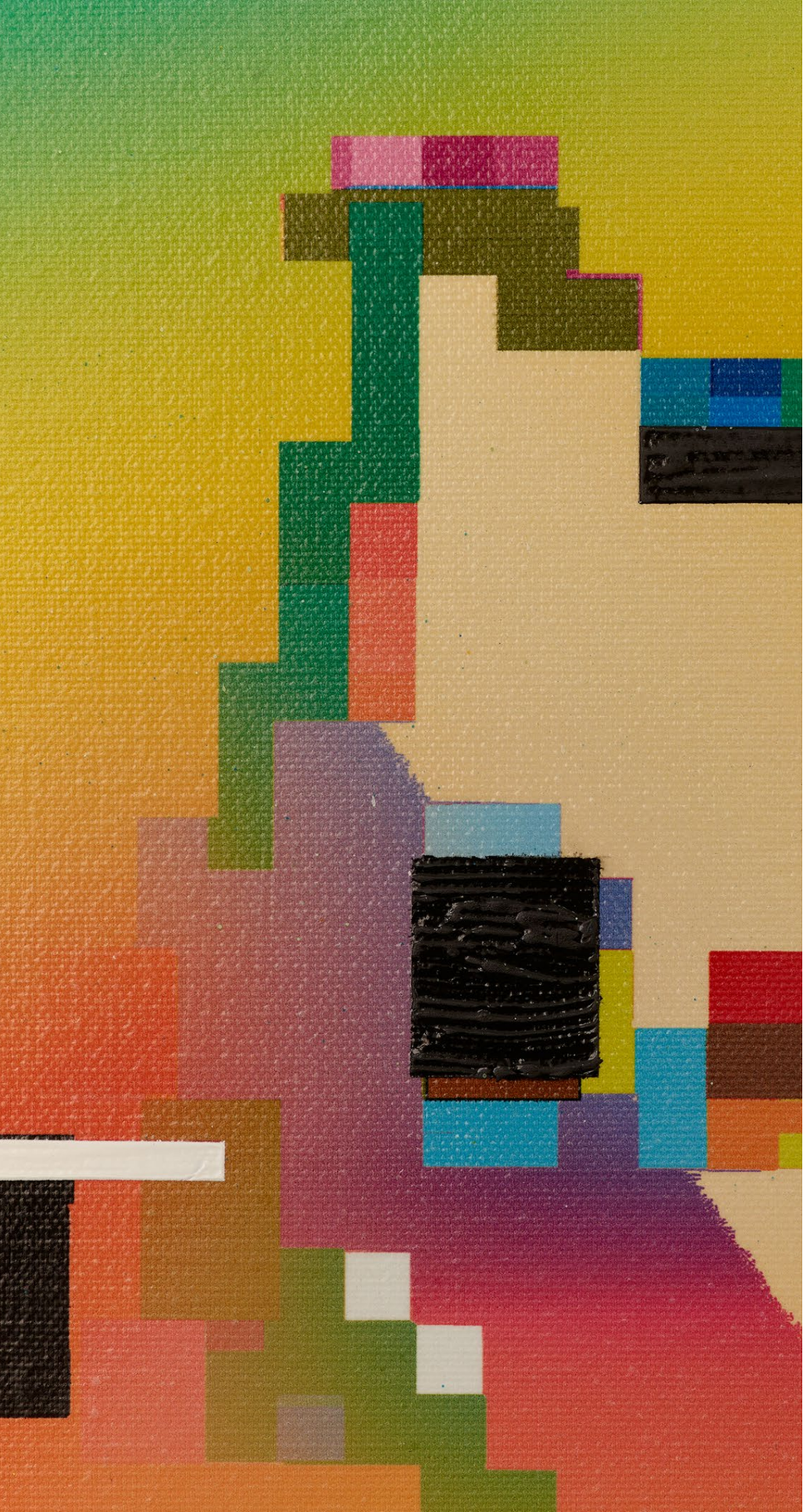
Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
Installation View



Database Painting Animal Totem #F1
2022-2023
Data, mixed media on canvas
64 x 101 cm

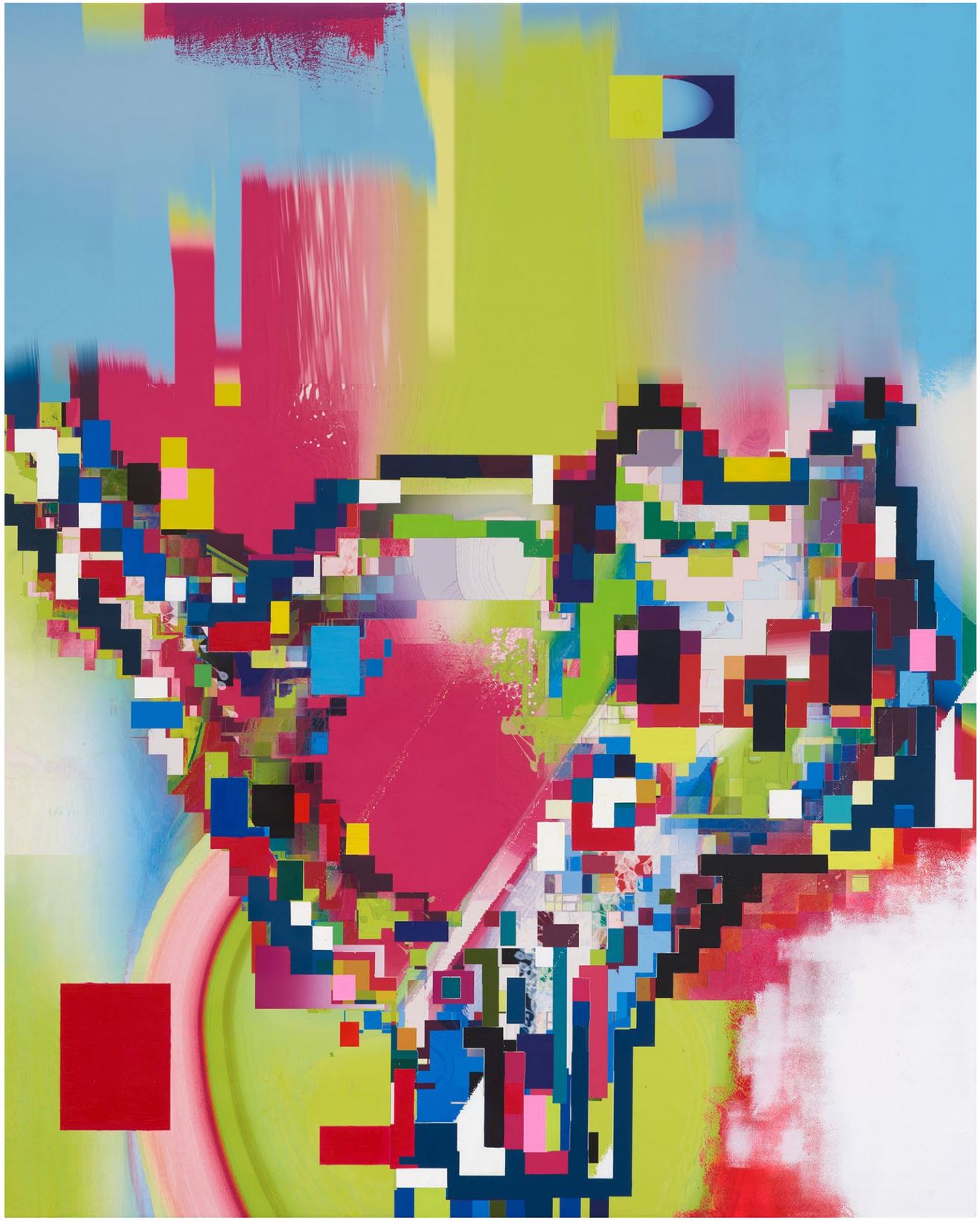
Room No. 1

Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
Installation View

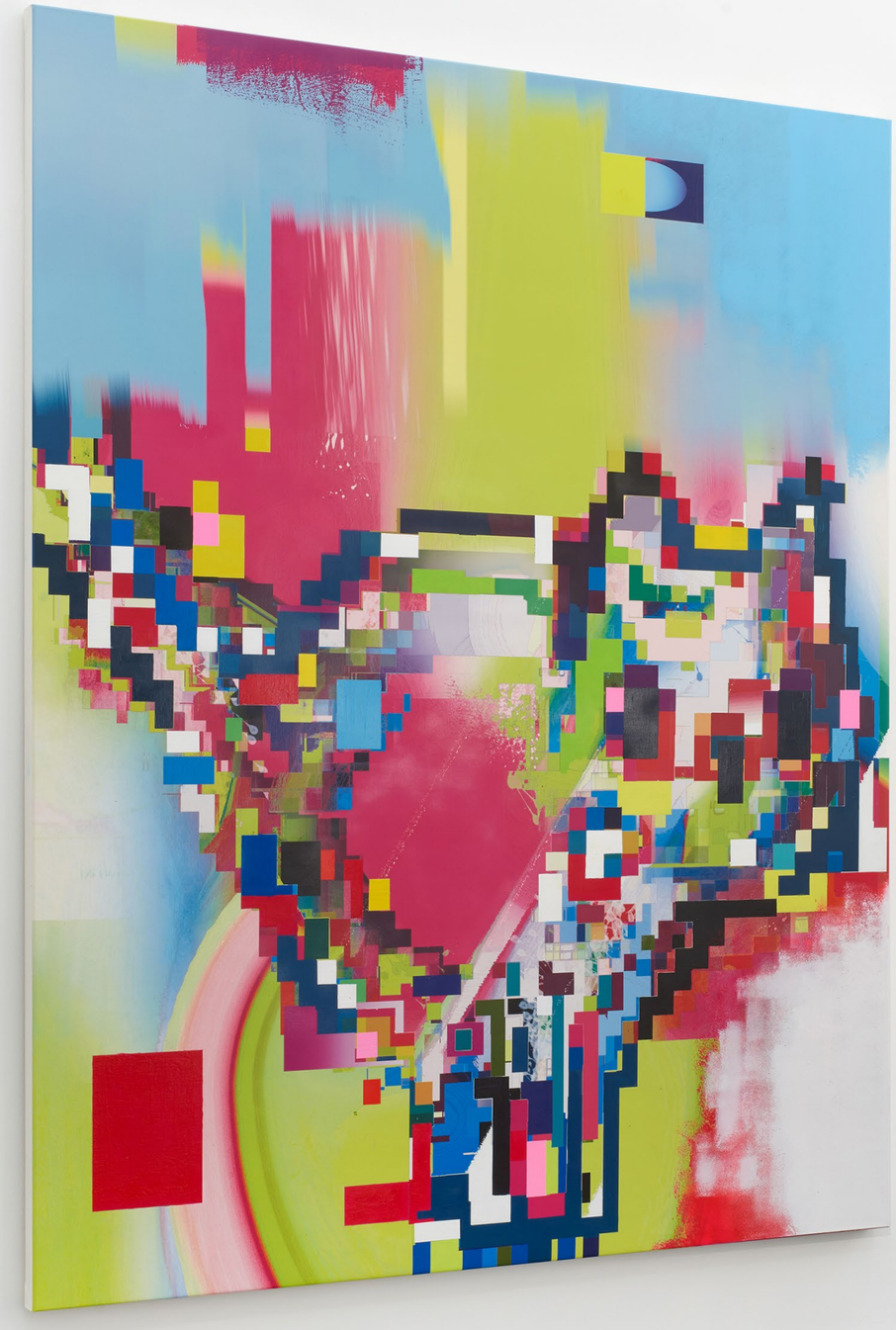


Database Painting Animal Totem #F3
2022-2023
Data, mixed media on canvas
64 x 101 cm

Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
Installation View

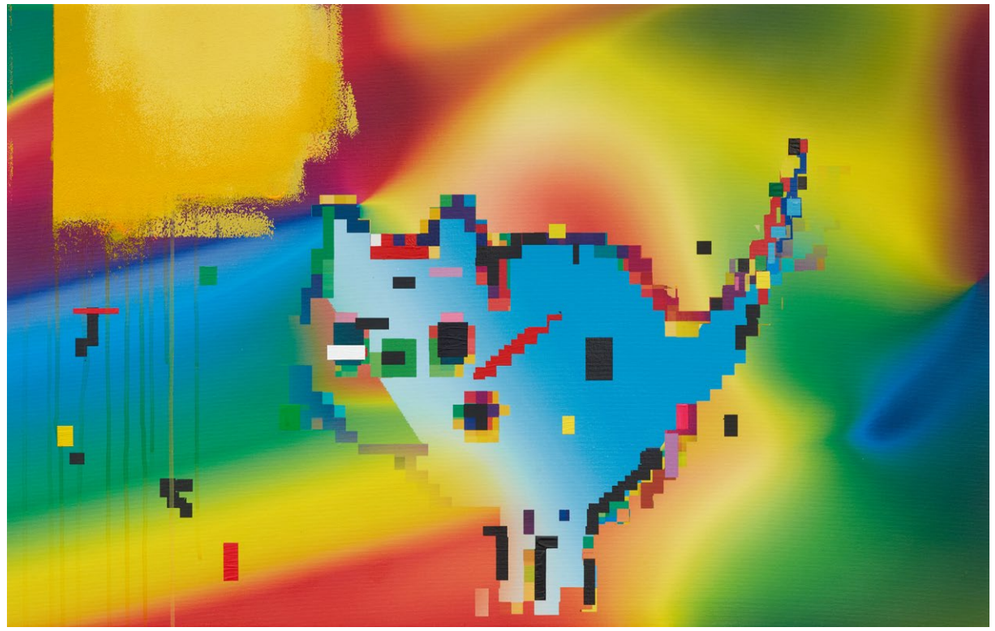


Database Painting Animal Totem „Hello Kitty #A1“
2022-2023
Data, mixed media on canvas
225 x 180 cm



Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
Installation View

Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
Installation View

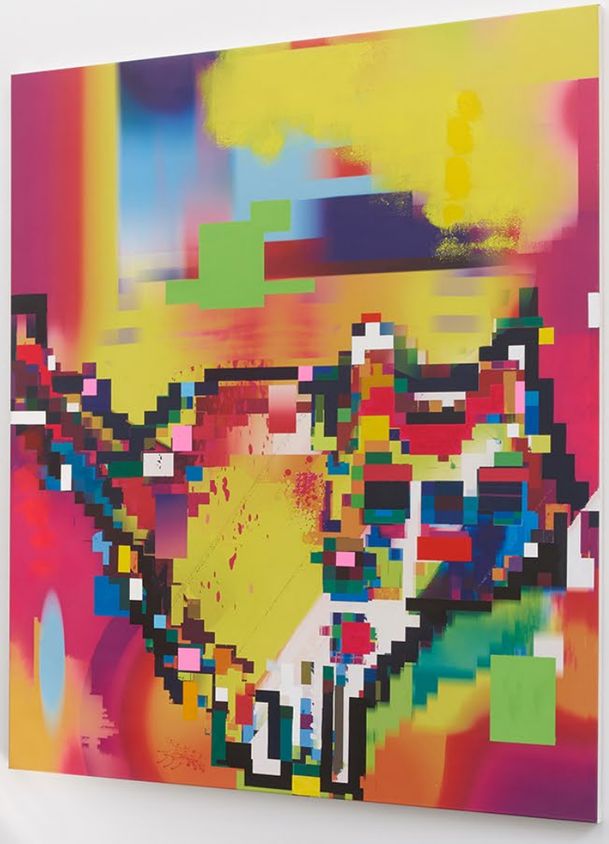


Database Painting Animal Totem #F2
2022-2023
Data, mixed media on canvas
64 x 101 cm

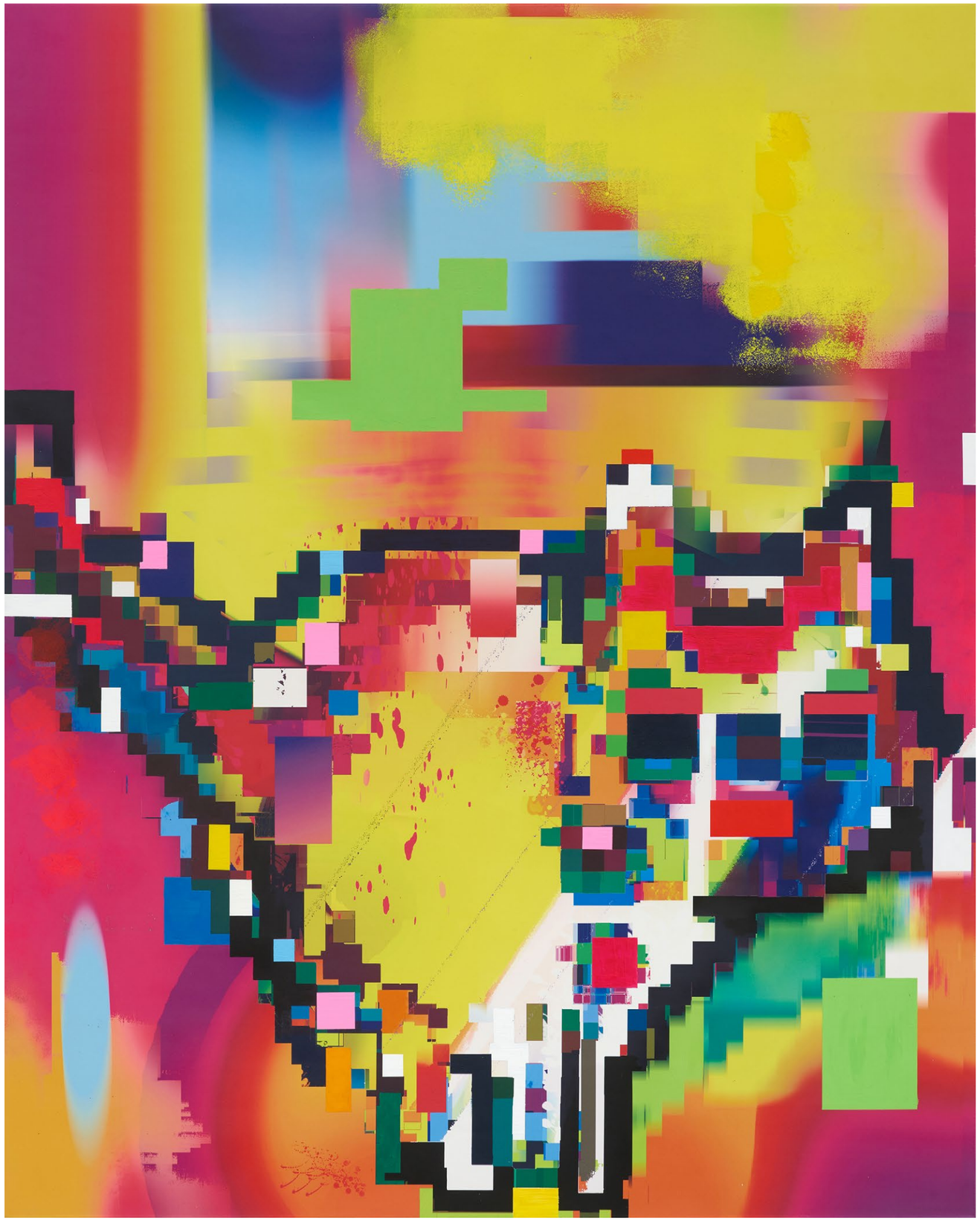
Room No. 2

Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
Installation View

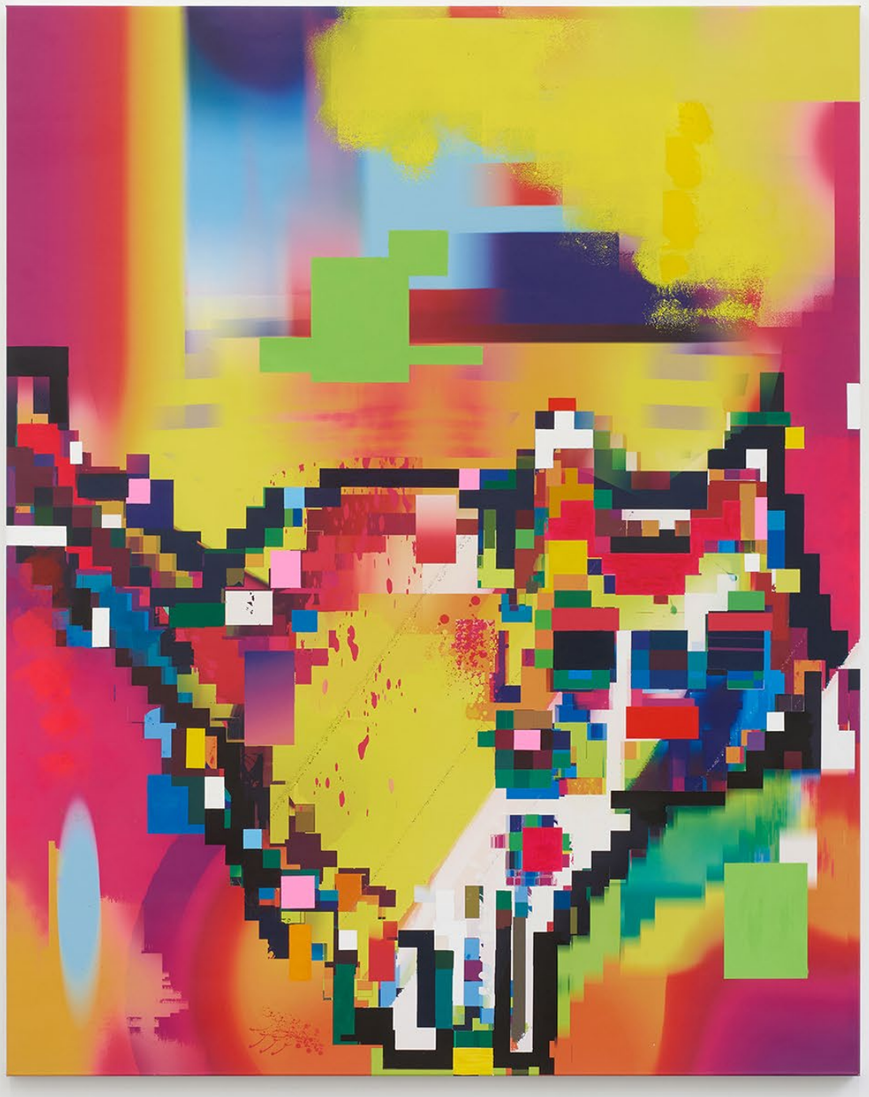
Database Painting Animal Totem „Hello Kitty #C1“
2022-2023
Data, mixed media on canvas
120 x 150 cm



Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
Installation View

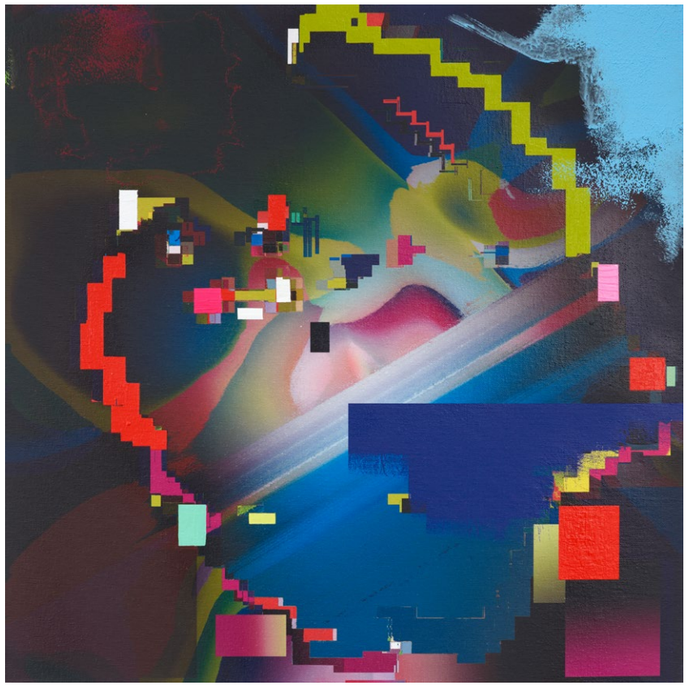


Database Painting Animal Totem „Hello Kitty #A3“
2022-2023
Data, mixed media on canvas
225 x 180 cm



Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
Installation View

Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
Installation View

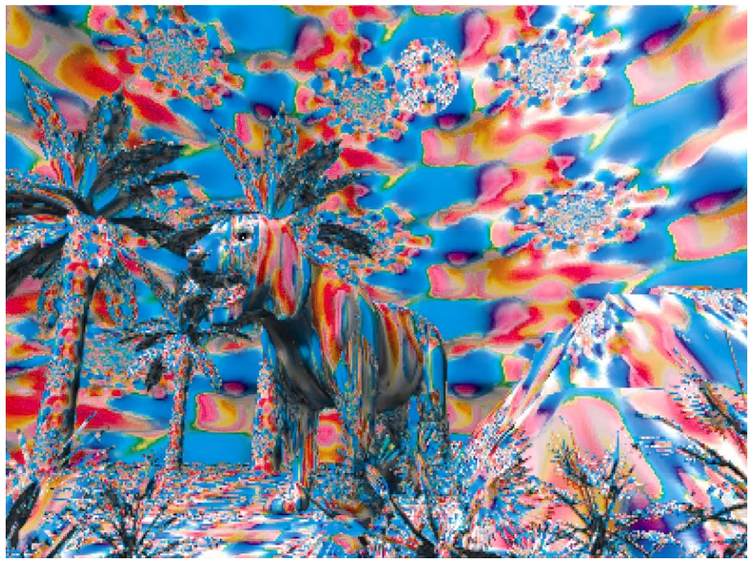


Database Painting Animal Totem „Hello Kitty #B10“
2022-2023
Data, mixed media on canvas
60 x 60 cm

Database Painting Animal Totem „Hello Kitty #B4“
2022-2023
Data, mixed media on canvas
60 x 60 cm

Room No. 3

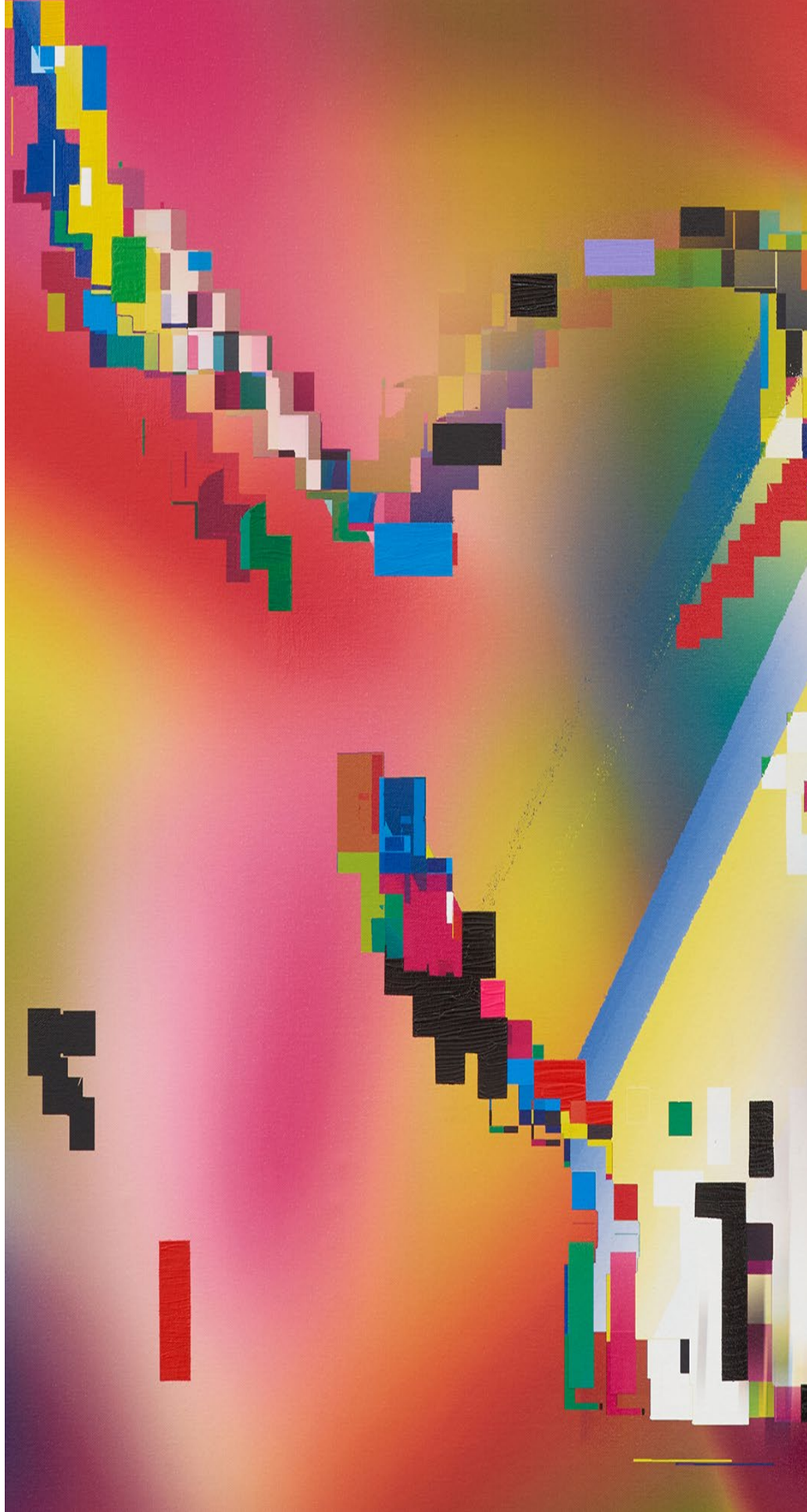
Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
Installation View



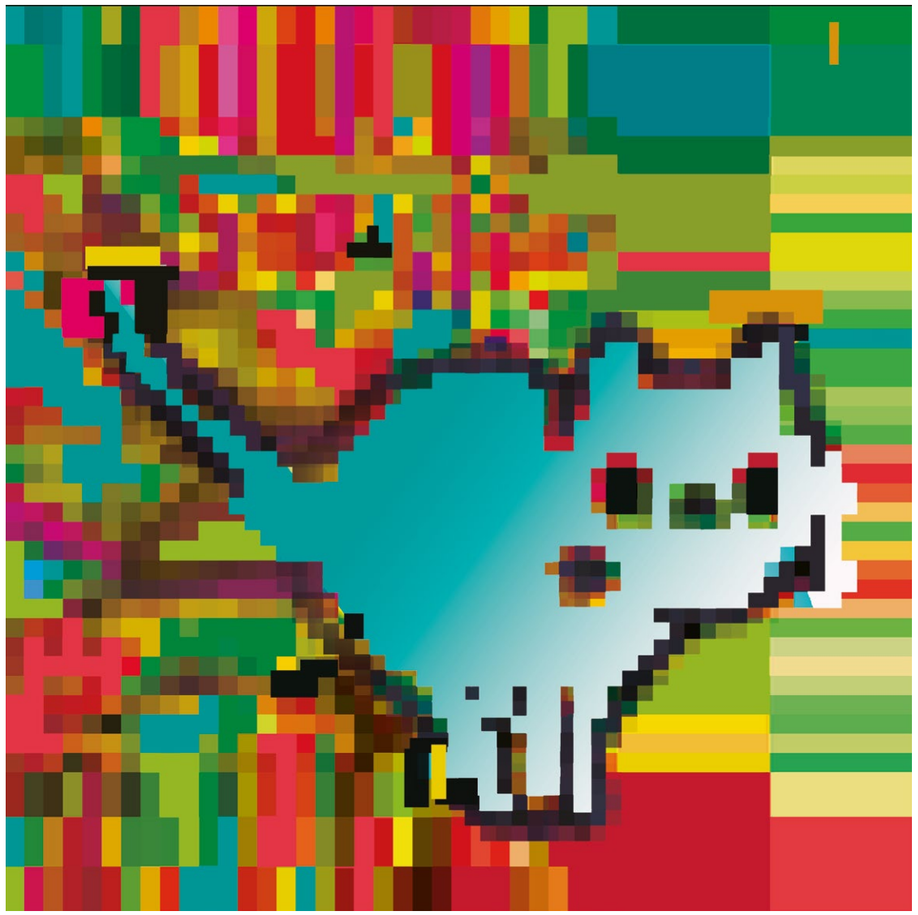
Database Painting 1999 Stolen Data, Animal Totem Tiger#22419234 (Stills)
1999-2022
Tools used: Son Joy's 386PC computer image data from kindergarten school,
Magic3D coloring book, cheetah, Photoshop, +2019, Vegas Pro 17
Original Resolution: 3840 x 2160 cm, Frame Speed: 59.94 ffps.

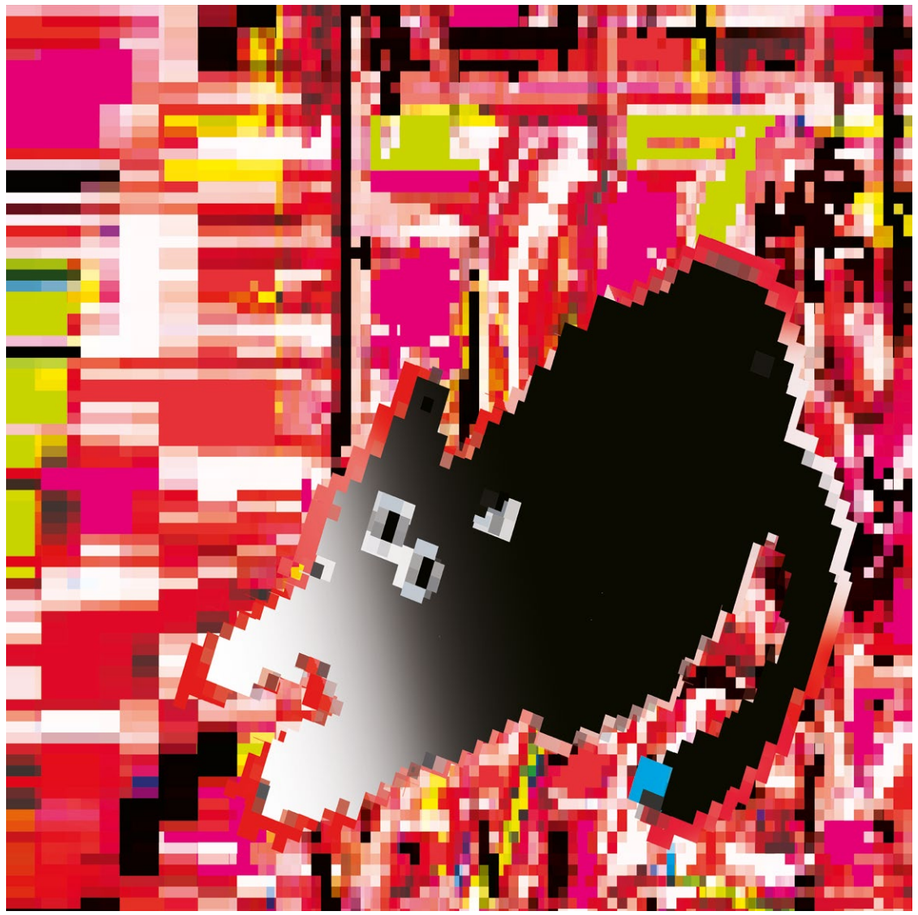
Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
Installation View

Database Painting Animal Totem „Hello Kitty #C2“
2022-2023
Data, mixed media on canvas
120 x 150 cm



Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
Installation View





Database Painting/Animal Totem Kitty #220070353-2
1999-2022
Tools used: Son Joy's 386PC computer image data from kindergarten school, Magic3D coloring book, cheetah, Photoshop
Original Resolution: 3945 x 3932 px, Photoshop Full Size: 3,343,185 bytes

Database Painting/Animal Totem Kitty #2207220354-01
1999-2022
Tools used: Son Joy's 386PC computer image data from kindergarten school, Magic3D coloring book, cheetah, Photoshop
Original Resolution: 3917 x 3956 px, Photoshop Full Size: 5,231,328 bytes

Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT
Installation View

Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT

Lange bevor sich die Mainstream-Medien so intensiv wie zur Zeit mit dem Thema der Künstlichen Intelligenz beschäftigten und lange bevor damit auch die Kunstwelt geflutet wurde, setzte sich Cody Choi (*1961 in Seoul, wo er lebt und arbeitet), der nicht nur bildender Künstler, sondern auch Theoretiker ist, mit digitalen Daten und algorithmischen Prozessen als Grundlage für Kunst auseinander. Er hatte von 1997 bis 1998 zu Konzepten von Datenerstellung und Digitalisierung von Meisterwerken geforscht und war fest davon überzeugt, dass digitale Daten im 21. Jahrhundert die Vorstellungskraft als Ressource für Kreativität ablösen würden und dass das algorithmisch angestoßene, autonome Wachstum von Daten den kreativen Akt von Künstler/innen ersetzen würde.

Cody Chois Arbeit an seinen sogenannten *Database Paintings* begann 1998 mit einem digitalen Bild, das sein Sohn Joy im Kindergartenalter mit einem Computerzeichenprogramm namens „Crayola Magic 3D Coloring Book“ zeichnete. Choi beobachtete, wie sein Sohn nicht lernte, mit Stiften auf Papier zu zeichnen, sondern mit einer Computermaus auf einem Computerbildschirm. Vor dem Hintergrund seiner theoretischen Überlegungen zu diesem Thema war die Beobachtung des Einflusses digitaler Technologien auf das Lernverhalten und die Kreativitätsentwicklung von Kindern der Anstoß für seine eigene künstlerische Auseinandersetzung mit digitalen Daten und algorithmischen Prozessen. Die digitalen Zeichnungen seines Sohnes waren jedoch nicht nur im übertragenen Sinne die Grundlage, der geistige Anstoß für Chois „datenbasierte Gemälde“, sondern auch im wörtlichen Sinne.

Mehr als 10 Jahre bevor der Bitcoin eingeführt wurde, entwickelte Choi Algorithmen, die hinsichtlich der Kettenreaktionen der Blockchain-Technik ähneln. Er exportierte die digitalen Zeichnungen seines Sohnes – Bilder von Katzen und Hunden –, vergrößerte und teilte die Daten und ließ die Algorithmen darüber laufen. So wurden die Zeichnungen einer „intelligenten Schichtung“, unterzogen, wobei sie von 400 bis zu tausende Male übereinandergelegt wurden. In diesem Prozess entwickelten sich – basierend auf den Originalzeichnungen – kontinuierlich und automatisch neue, aufeinander basierende Bilder. Choi hat diese Bilder seinerzeit gespeichert. Heute schafft er aus ausgewählten Bildern die *Database Paintings* (Datenbasierte Gemälde), ein neues, von ihm initiiertes Genre. Dazu werden die digitalen Bilder als UV-Print auf Leinwände gedruckt und dann partiell mit Acryl bemalt – spätestens damit werden sie aus dem Status des mehr oder minder „digitalen“ Seins in die analoge Welt überführt. So entwickelt Choi mit den *Database Paintings* einen Hybrid; traditionelle Malerei trifft auf digitale Technologien und Drucktechniken.

Chois Beschäftigung mit kulturellen Hybriden hat ihren Ursprung in seiner Biografie und zunächst wenig mit Digitalität zu tun. Er wuchs in Seoul auf, mit Anfang zwanzig musste er mit seiner Familie aus politischen Gründen aus Südkorea in die Vereinigten Staaten fliehen. Während die Familie in Südkorea zunächst ein gutes und materiell gesichertes Leben geführt hatte, lebte sie in den USA, wo sie sich in Los Angeles niedergelassen hatte, ein von Verunsicherung geprägtes Leben – und musste von vorne beginnen. Nachdem er zunächst kurz in Seoul Soziologie studiert hatte, begann er 1985 ein Kunststudium in Los Angeles bei Mike Kelley. Choi erlebte die USA als einen chaotischen und frustrierenden Ort. Die Unterschiede zwischen der amerikanischen und südkoreanischen Kultur machten sich für ihn nicht nur auf zwischenmenschlicher und gesellschaftlicher Ebene bemerkbar, sondern auch hinsichtlich der Kunstpraktiken und des Kunstmarkts. Entsprechend beschäftigte er sich in seiner Arbeit auch mit dem Thema der asiatischen Identitätsfindung in der US-amerikanischen Gesellschaft.

Das Interesse des Künstlers an kulturellen Hybriden und sozialen Phänomenen, die sich ständig selbst (re-)produzieren, dehnte sich seit den 1990er Jahren auf die Auseinandersetzung mit der aufkommenden Digitalkultur aus. Die *Database Paintings* können – psychologisch – als Symbol für den Tod eines autoritären Vaters (die prädigitale Kunst und das kreative, autonome Wesen der Künstler) gelesen werden. Das Totem, das in der frühzeitlichen Ära für soziale Solidarität stand, wird durch das dem Sohn entliehene und digitalisierte Tierbild ersetzt. Choi, der schon sehr früh voraussah, dass die Welt des Digitalen das 21. Jahrhundert dominieren wird, und der verstand, dass die „Doppelhirn“-Struktur, in der virtuelle und reale Dinge koexistieren, alltäglich werden würde, stellt nun auch die Frage, was NFT-Kunst bedeutet – indem er sich selbst als Autor fast herauszieht und den Computer „arbeiten läßt“. Es ist, so findet er, an der Zeit, das Konzept und die ästhetischen Grundlagen der digitalen Kunst zu bestimmen und ihren kunsthistorischen Wert zu überdenken.

Cody Choi studierte Kunst am Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Kalifornien. Er lebte Mitte der 1990er Jahre in New York; mit seiner Ausstellung *The Thinker* 1996 bei Deitch Projects in New York war er einer der ersten koreanischen Künstler, der sich in einer global vernetzten Welt verortete. Von 2015 bis 2017 hatte er eine retrospektive Wanderausstellung in der Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, im Musée d'Art Contemporain de Marseille, in den Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz und an der Universität Malaga, die u.a. der britische Kunsthistoriker John C. Welchman kuratiert hatte. Choi war in 2017 einer der beiden Künstler, die Südkorea in Venedig auf der Biennale repräsentierten. Seit 2003 lebt er wieder in Seoul, wo er eine Professur innehat. Zu seinen Veröffentlichungen gehören *Topography of 20th Century Culture* (2006) und *Topography of Contemporary Culture* (2010), die sich kritisch mit der zeitgenössischen Gesellschaft und Kultur auseinandersetzen.

Cody Choi
Animal Totem + NFT

Long before the mainstream media focused as intensively as it currently does on the subject of artificial intelligence, and long before it flooded the art world, Cody Choi (*1961 in Seoul, where he lives and works), who is not only a visual artist but also a theorist, had been exploring digital data and algorithmic processes as the basis for art. He had been researching concepts of data creation and digitization of masterpieces from 1997 to 1998 and was firmly convinced that digital data would replace imagination as a resource for creativity in the 21st century and that the algorithmically initiated, autonomous growth of data would replace the creative act of artists.

Cody Choi's work on his so-called *Database Paintings* began in 1998 with a digital image that his kindergarten-age son Joy drew using a computer drawing program called "Crayola Magic 3D Coloring Book". Choi observed how his son was not learning to draw with pens on paper, but rather with a computer mouse on a computer screen. In light of his theoretical reflections on the subject, his observation of the influence of digital technologies on children's learning behavior and creative development was the impetus for his own artistic exploration of digital data and algorithmic processes. However, his son's digital drawings were not only the basis, the intellectual inspiration for Choi's "data-based paintings" in a figurative sense, but also in the literal sense.

More than 10 years before Bitcoin was introduced, Choi developed algorithms similar to blockchain technology in terms of chain reactions. He exported his son's digital drawings – pictures of cats and dogs – magnified and split the data, then ran his algorithms over them. Thus, the drawings were subjected to "smart layering", where they were overlaid from 400 to thousands of times. In this process – based on the original drawings – new images developed continuously and automatically, each based on the previous one. Choi stored these images at the time. Today, he uses selected images to create *Database Paintings*, a new genre he initiated. The digital images are UV printed on canvases and then partially painted on with acrylic – thus transferring them from the status of being more or less "digital" into the analog world. With the *Database Paintings* Choi creates a hybrid: traditional painting meets digital technologies and printing techniques.

Choi's occupation with cultural hybrids is rooted in his biography and initially has little to do with digitality. He grew up in Seoul, but when he was in his early twenties, he and his family had to flee from South Korea to the United States for political reasons. While the family had lived a good and materially secure life in South Korea, they found themselves living a life marked by uncertainty in the U.S., where they settled in Los Angeles – and had to start all over again. After briefly studying sociology in Seoul, he began studying art in Los Angeles with Mike Kelley in 1985. Choi experienced the U.S. as a chaotic and frustrating place. The differences between American and South Korean cultures became apparent to him not only on an interpersonal and social level, but also in terms of art practices and the art market. Reflecting this, his work also explored the theme of Asian identity formation in U.S. society.

Since the 1990s, the artist's interest in cultural hybrids and social phenomena that constantly (re-)produce themselves has extended to an examination of the emerging digital culture. The *Database Paintings* can be read – psychologically – as symbolizing the death of an authoritarian father (pre-digital art and the creative, autonomous nature of artists). The totem that stood for social solidarity in the pre-digital era is replaced by the digitalized animal image borrowed from the son. Choi, who foresaw very early on that the Digital World would dominate the 21st century, and who understood that the "double brain" structure in which virtual and real things coexist would become commonplace, now also questions what NFT art means – by almost pulling himself out as the author and letting the computer "do the work". He believes it is time to define the concept and aesthetic foundations of digital art and to reconsider its art historical value.

Cody Choi studied art at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California. He lived in New York in the mid-1990s; with his 1996 exhibition *The Thinker* at Deitch Projects in New York, he was one of the first Korean artists to locate himself in a globally connected world. From 2015 to 2017, he had a retrospective traveling exhibition at Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Musée d'Art Contemporain de Marseille, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, and Malaga University, curated by British art historian John C. Welchman and others. In 2017, Choi was one of the two artists representing South Korea in Venice at the Biennale. He lives in Seoul since 2003, where he holds a professorship. His publications include *Topography of 20th Century Culture* (2006) and *Topography of Contemporary Culture* (2010), which critically examine contemporary society and culture.

Cody Choi

1961 born in Seoul, Korea
lives and works in Seoul
1980–83 Korea University, Department of Sociology, Seoul
1986–90 Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, California, USA

Awards and Grants

2011 Excellent Book Select, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Korea
1994 International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISCP) Grant, New York
1993 International Studio and Curatorial Program (ISCP) Grant, New York
1990 San Marino League, Fine Art Association Scholarship Award, San Marino
1989 Pasadena Art Alliance, Fine Art Scholarship Award, Pasadena
1988 Art Center One Hundred Scholarship Award, Pasadena
1987 Hallmark Cards Inc. Minority Scholarship Award, Kansas City
1987 Art Center One Hundred Scholarship Award, Pasadena

Solo Shows (Selected)

2023 Animal Totem + NFT, Philipp von Rosen Galerie, Cologne
„HELLO KITTY" Database Painting Totem + NFT, PKM Gallery, Seoul
The Soul of the Silk Road, Sevil Dolmacı Art Gallery, Istanbul
2022 Mr Hard Mix Master – Noblesse Hybridige Series 3, Meyer Riegger, Berlin
2021 1999 Cody Choi + NFT, PKM Gallery, Soeul
2020 Spurs Gallery Beijing
2019 A Stitch in Time, Today Art Museum, Beijing
Hard Mix Master Series 2: Noblesse Hybridige, PKM Gallery, Seoul
Outdoor Project Cody Choi: Venetian Rhapsody-The Power of Bluff, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Cheongju, Korea
2018 Counterbalance, Arko Art Center, Seoul
2017 Instant Satisfaction, Philipp von Rosen Galerie, Cologne
Counterbalance, 57th Venice Biennale, Korean Pavilion, Venice
Culture Cuts, Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, Chemnitz
2016 Is that Beauty? Cody Choi Retrospective. Exhibition Halls in the Rectorate of the University of Málaga, Spain
The Sala Moreno Villa - Málaga, Spain
The Sala Moreno Villa - Málaga, Spain
Color Painting (CHEESEKHWA): Frustration is Beautiful, PKM Gallery, Seoul
Cody Choi – Culture Cuts, MAC Musée d'Art Contemporain de Marseille, Marseille
2015 CODY CHOI. Culture Cuts, Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf
2011 2nd Chapter of Post-colonialism, PKM Trinity Gallery, Seoul
2009 Luminous Future, Konkuk University, Seoul
2008 Cody Choi: Passage in Peking, PKM Gallery, Beijing
2006 Cody Choi: Passage, PKM Gallery, Seoul
2004 Corner / de-Corner: Bruce Nauman + Cody Choi, PKM Gallery, Seoul
2003 Multiplying Difference: Post-Ready Made, PKM Gallery, Seoul
2000 New Pictorialism, Data Base Painting ¬– We are in Jungle, Kukje Gallery, Seoul
1998 The End of the 20th Century Soil Project, Kaywon University of Art and Design, Uiwang
1996 The Thinker, Deitch Projects, New York
Not Conservative, in Conserve (Becoming a Gesture of the Real), Kukje Gallery, Seoul
1993 Blow my Top, Mee Gun Gallery, Seoul
1992 Dip the Pink, Total Art Museum, Yangju
Cody Choi, Mee Gun Gallery, Seoul

Group Shows (Selected)

2023 Bruce Naumann | Cody Choi, Special Presentation, PKM Gallery, Seoul
Straight Flush, Philipp von Rosen Galerie, Cologne
2022 On Paper, PKM Gallery, Seoul
2021 Korean Eye 2020: Creativity and Daydream, Lotte World Tower Mall, Seoul
2020 In the Name of Flower, Pearl Art Museum, Shanghai
Korean Eye 2020: Creativity and Daydream, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg
2019 The Adventures of Korean Painting: I Will Go Away by Myself, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Cheonju
The 4th Today's Documents – A Stitch in Time, Beijing Today Art Museum, Beijing
Beyond the Sun, Incheon Art Platform, Incheon
2019 Art Theorema, Imago Mundi Museum, Italy
2018 ISCP Benefit Auction, New York, USA
Light in/as Image, Stuttgart-Möhringen, Germany
Collection Highlight, GMoMA, Gyeonggi-do
Between Power and Disease, CAN Foundation, Seoul
2016 LANCEL Paris, Vernissage à l'occasion de la sortie du livre
Changwon City Museum; Gyeongnam Museum; Sungsan Art Hall, Korea
Old & New, Kansong Art Museum, Seoul
As the Moon Waxes and Wanes (30 Years of MMCA Gwacheon), MMCA Gwacheon, Gwacheon
Vitrines sur l'Art, MAC Musée d'Art Contemporain, Marseille
ZOO-MACHINE, MAC Musée d'Art Contemporain, Marseille
2014 Busan Biennale, Voyage to Biennale: 50 Years of Contemporary Korean Art in Overseas Biennales, Busan Museum of Art; Busan Cultural Center, Busan
2012 A Tribute to Mike Kelley, MOCA The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
2011 The New Epicenter: Chapter 2 Post-Human, Woomin Art Center, Cheongju
2010 1st Media Art Festival, Digifest, Gwangju Biennale Exhibition Center, Gwangju
Oh! Masterpieces, Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art, Ansan
2008 6th Busan Biennale, Busan Museum of Art, Busan
Meme Trackers, Song Zhuang Art Center, Beijing
2007 Art Beijing 2007, National Agricultural Exhibition Center, Beijing
2006 The 6th Shanghai Biennale, Hyper Design, Shanghai Art Museum, Shanghai
Papertainer, Papertainer Museum, Seoul Olympic Park, Seoul
Hybridism: Web Tree, COMA Gallery, Seoul
2004 Standing on a Bridge, Arario Gallery, Cheonan
Digital Sublime: New Masters of Universe, Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei
2002 The 2nd Seoul International Media Art Biennale, Luna's Flow: Media_City, Seoul Museum of Art
Snapshot, Beaver College Art Gallery, Glenside
2001 Ghost World, CAIS Gallery, Seoul
Digital Dreams, Analogue Desires, Arko Art Center, Seoul
2000 Snapshot, The Contemporary, Baltimore
New York University Faculty Exhibition, 80 Washington Square East Gallery, New York
Continental Shift-Aachen/Heerien/Liega/Maastricht, Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen; Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht; Musée d'Art moderne et d'Art contemporain, Liége; Stadsgalerij Heerlen Museum, Heerlen
1999 Mug Shots: Performing Persona, Atrium Gallery, University of Connecticut at Storrs
A Room with a View, Sixth Prince Fine Art, New York
1998 Body in Painting, Hanlim Museum, Daejeon; Daelim Cultural Foundation, Seoul
Food Matters, Center Gallery, Bucknell University, Lewisburg; Van Dam Gallery, New York
The Space/Incoded, Kukje Gallery, Seoul
1997 First Look, A project of art knowledge and the downtown arts festival, NewYork
New York University Faculty Exhibition, 80WSE Gallery, New York
1996 Images of Self, Schick art Gallery, Skidmore College, Saratoga Spring
L'art au corps: le corps exposé de Man Ray à nos jours, Musée d'Art Contemporain, Marseille; Musée de Marseille
Imaginary Anatomy, Pasinger Fabrik, Munich
Mr. Edison's Black Box, The World Wide Web, Phenix.com, Paris
Exhibition for New York Asian Woman's Center Auction, New York Asian Women's Center, New York
Not a Metaphor, Art Projects International, New York
Fun House Exhibition Part One and Two, ES vandam Gallery, New York
I.S.P. Open Studio, International Studio Program, New York
Border Crawl, Kukje Gallery, Seoul
1994 I.S.P. Open Studio, International Studio and Curatorial Program, New York
Selected Group Exhibition, American Fine Arts, New York
Flesh and Ciphers, Here Art Foundation, New York
I.C. Editions, Susan Inglett Gallery, New York
1988 Organic Realism, Annex Gallery, Pasadena

Public and private collections

Arrario Museum, Seoul
Art Sonje Center, Seoul
Can Foundation, Seoul
Mercedes-Benz Art Collection
Hansol Museum, Wonju
Hypovereinsbank Kunstsammlung, München
Kaywon School of Art & Design, Gyeonggi-do
Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf
MAC Museum of Contemporary Art, Marseille
The Margulies Collection, Miami, Florida
MOCA Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, California
National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Seoul
Paradise Cultural Foundation, Seoul
Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul
Song Eun Cultural Foundation, Seoul

Publications

Author
Choi, Cody. Topography of 20th Century Culture. Culturegrapher, Korea, 2010.
Choi, Cody. Topography of Contemporary Culture. Culturegrapher, Korea, 2006.
Choi, Cody. Topography of 20th Century Culture for Understanding Contemporary Culture.Ahn Graphics, Korea, 2006.

Co-Author
Woo Chan Park, Keun Joon Lim, Suk Jae Lim, Hyun Hwa Kim, Mee Kyung Kim, Cody Choi. Abstraction, Changed the World. Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art. Korea, 2013.
Woo Chan Park, Jung Hee Lee, Bo Yeon Lee, Mee Kyung Kim, Cody Choi. Sang Yong Shim. Understanding of Modern and Contemporary East Asian Art.Gyeonggi Museum of Modern Art. Korea, 2013
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