

ABSENCE

2020

THEODORA
KANELLIS

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ABSENCE

Machines are noticing things that do not necessarily exist. When something seems absent from vision there is still an underlying presences that feels or listens and tries to explain and understand.

Inspired by Cathy Wilkes's exhibition (La Biennale di Venezia 2019), two trained algorithms generated their own paintings and narrations corresponding to subjects of death, pain, motherhood, childhood and faith.

The painter Theodora Kanelli designed the interpretations of the aforementioned machine generations into drawings.

These successive interpretations by human and machine actors, lead to the loss of the initial message.



PERFORMANCE

Theodora Kanelli and two machines perform in front of the audience. The objective is to create a dialogue between Cathy's exhibition, people's reflections and computers' interpretations. Specifically, two computational systems discuss about the art exhibition, like art critics. At the same time, the painter captures the machines generations into paintings.

It looks like the Chinese telephone game, in which the message is getting garbled along the way.

The audience has the opportunity to compare the original idea with the final version and create a debate about the notion of open interpretation in art but also the unreliability of the computational systems.

INPUT

Quotes from the exhibition's catalogue, written by Cathy Wilkes and Zoe Whitley.

Cathy Wilkes's exhibition's photos in the British Pavilion for the 58th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia.

Notes from Cathy Wilkes guided tour around the pavilion written by British Council Fellows.

COMPUTATION

Attentional Generative Adversarial Network (AttnGAN) allows fine-grained text-to-image synthesis.

im2txt model is trained in one million captioned photographs & Fully Convolutional Localization Network (FCLN) separates different regions in the photo and create captions for all of them.

GPT-2 model is trained in an unsupervised language on data drawn from the internet, to predict the next words of the passage.

OUTPUT

IMAGES

CAPTIONS

STORIES

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2020

Theodora Kanelli, 13-13



2020

Theodora Kanelli, Βαριά βάρη



2020

Theodora Kanelli, Untitled



2020

Theodora Kanelli, Untitled



2020

Theodora Kanelli, Échecs ou échec



2020

Theodora Kanelli, Untitled

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ROOM ONE



Cathy Wilkes, Room 1, British Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia, 2019

**CAPTION GENERATED
by image to text model**

a room with a bed and a vase of flowers

2019

Cathy Wilkes

*"I solemnise and dignify the **ghosts** of interference which proceed from their origin and whip themselves up before me I observe, they nucleate and propagate. If I could disappear, how fluid, how graceful and unending, how undisturbed and unpredictable would be the changing patterns thereabout."*

**IMAGE GENERATED
by text to image model**



2020

Theodora Kanelli, *Échecs ou échec*, 54x54 cm

R O O M T W O

2019	Cathy Wilkes
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"The work suggests the Assumption, the burial of the body (the subject) when it leaves a slate of personal definition and the ascent of the soul into Heaven when it joins the infinite (the object)."

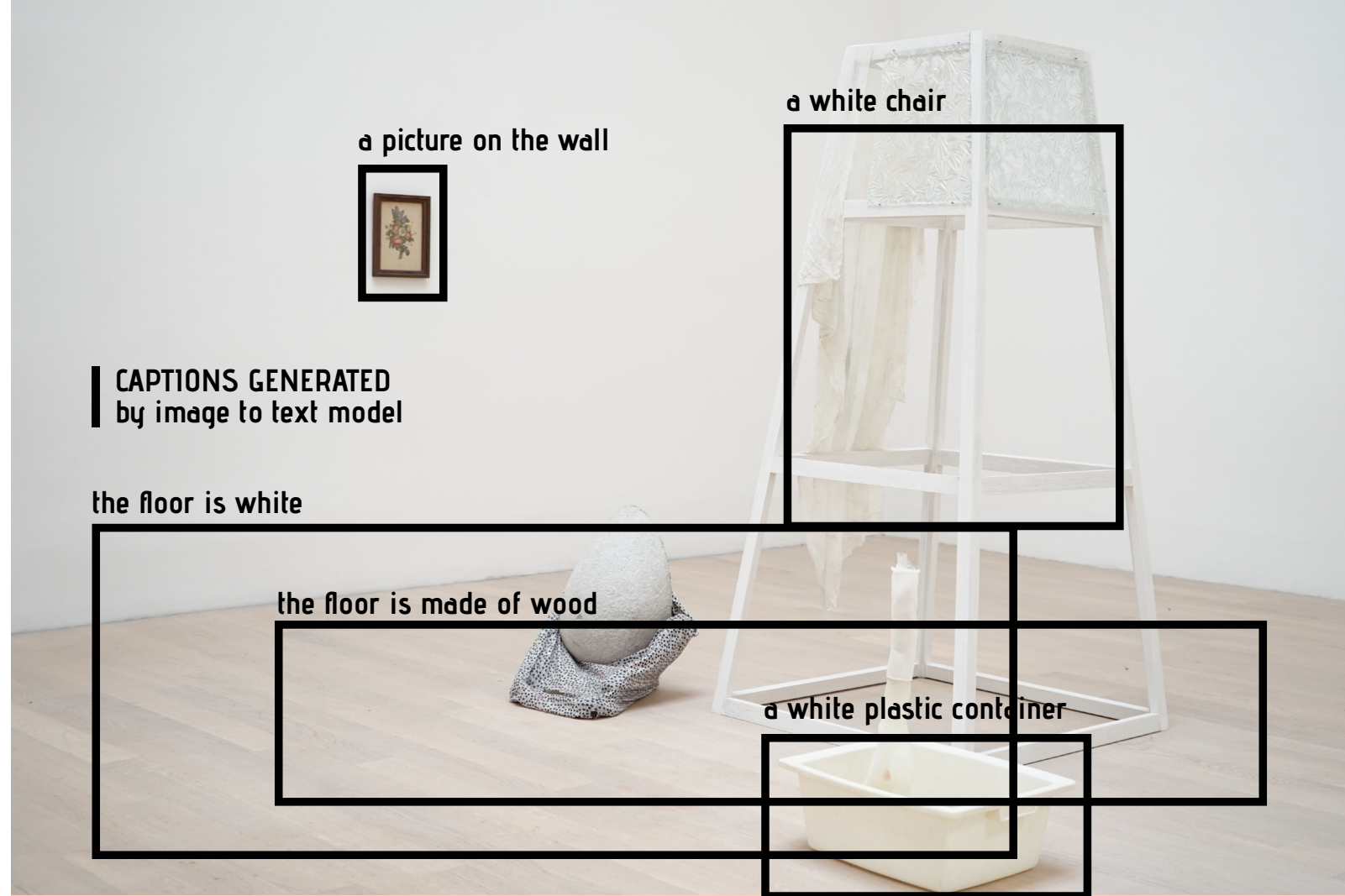
STORY GENERATED by text to text model

What does this work take away?

That we are all beautiful as we come together.



2020	Theodora Kanelli, Untitled, 54x54 cm
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a picture on the wall



a white chair



CAPTIONS GENERATED
by image to text model

the floor is white

the floor is made of wood

a white plastic container



Cathy Wilkes, Room 3, British Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia, 2019

**CAPTION GENERATED
by image to text model**

***woman** standing in front of a vase with flowers*

2019

Cathy Wilkes

*"I learned from my **children**; they were mediating with their pictures and their little objects. They relived things and sometimes they rehearsed for the fulfilment of wishes or for **loss**."*

**IMAGE GENERATED
by text to image model**



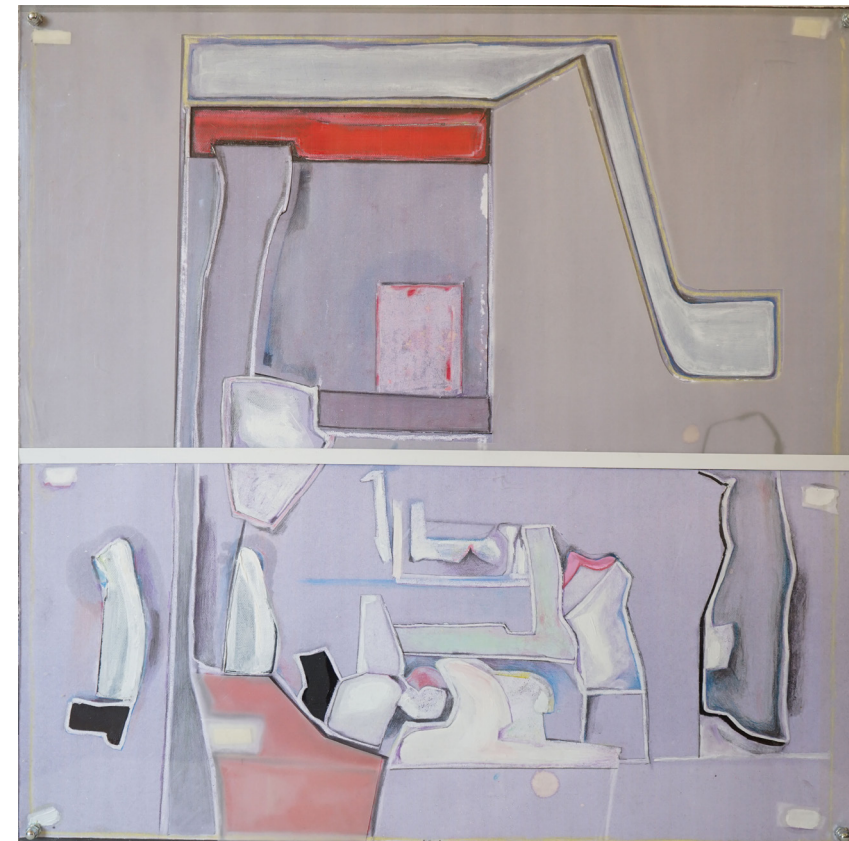
2019

British Council Fellow

"Cathy Wilkes is an artist who finds deep, spiritual connection in the power of motherhood."

**STORY GENERATED
by text to text model**

In her personal experiences, she shares the critical pain of motherhood, and as an artist she gives life to the capacity for pain that is the gift of **motherhood**.



2020

Theodora Kanelli, Untitled, 54x54 cm

2019

Cathy Wilkes

"A **doll** is an idea of a being. A sculpture is like a doll - an idea of something in my inner world - a connection with an idea. All sculpture is conceptual, even an imaginary object is like a doll."

IMAGE GENERATED
by text to image model



2020

Theodora Kanelli, Βαριά βάρη, 54x65 cm

2019

Cathy Wilkes & Zoé Whitley

"A doll isn't a representation of a literal living, breathing, flesh-and-blood **child** and any relation to something, physical or non-physical, is connected to our experience of infancy."

STORY GENERATED
by text to text model

This is quite self-evident: the expressions and memories of **children** are real. All of us think and have dreams about our babies; our 'babies' are metaphors for a particular moment in time.

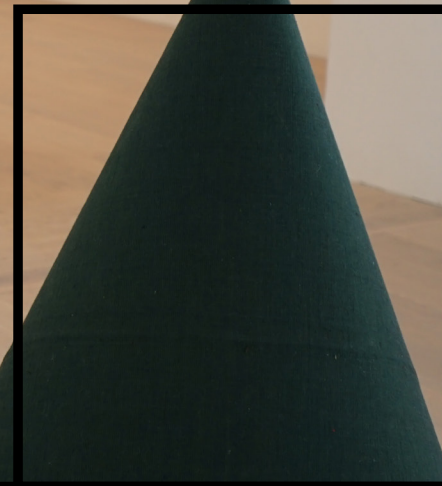
the picture is white

CAPTIONS GENERATED
by image to text model

the top of the white bird



the top of the tower is green





Cathy Wilkes, Room 5, British Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia, 2019

IMAGE GENERATED
by text to image model



2019

Cathy Wilkes

*"In the beginning was the Mediation and the Mediation was with **God** and the Mediation was God."*

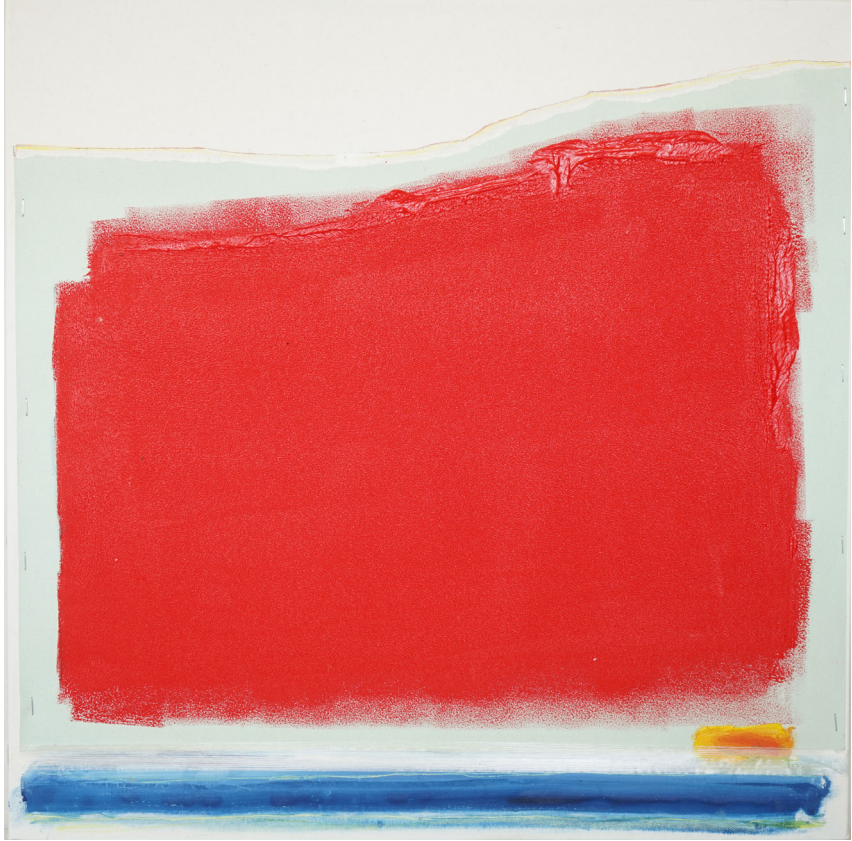
2019

British Council Fellow

"Body and monumentality, reduction to make room for ideas"

STORY GENERATED
by text to text model

But that which is divine, this which is the object and realization of the Highest One (the **God**), can make one's destiny into a life's adventure, and will thus bring about such spiritualism.



2020

Theodora Kanelli, 13-13, 54x54 cm

R O O M S I X



Cathy Wilkes, Room 6, British Pavilion, La Biennale di Venezia, 2019

2019	Cathy Wilkes
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*"It proposes that relations both intimate and social become 'objects' in the unconscious mind that are internalised to become part of one's **inner world**."*

IMAGE GENERATED
by text to image model



2019	British Council Fellow
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"Feeling drawn into a far away place"

STORY GENERATED
by text to text model

A warm spring day with all the trees and flowers in full bloom. Maybe one of the tallest **mountains** you have ever seen. Somewhere else entirely.

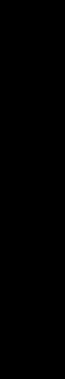


2020	Theodora Kanelli, Untitled, 65x80 cm
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how can machines interpret art?

Computation is changing aesthetics and there is great debate regarding the role of the artists and appreciators of the arts in this trend. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that all these sophisticated machines, are biased and result of human programming. But we can discuss further and design connections and interactions with these convincingly creative machines. Instead of looking at them as tools, we can try to face them as equal collaborators and explore what new creative ideas we can develop with them.





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