

# AN ETHEREAL ENCOUNTER

*Movie Director Martha Fiennes has created an AI driven moving image artwork, which delves deep into the universe with Salma Hayek playing the lead role*

A WOMAN WITH LONG DARK locks sits squeamishly in a chair with mushrooms extending out from her hair. Mushrooms grow from the pretty patterned floor where her chair is seated. She tilts her head to one side, while her deep red dress extends glamorously out in an elegant trail to the other. The woman is none other than Salma Hayek in Martha Fiennes's latest moving image artwork, *Yugen*. A scintillating scene and one that immediately conjures up serendipitous vibrations the minute you behold its otherworldly elegance, *Yugen*, produced by **Tendercapital**, refers to a concept in Japanese aesthetics that alludes to a deep understanding of the universe. This moving artwork enters into the still largely unfamiliar realm of AI. Made using a combination of artificial computer generated imagery, bespoke coding technology and filmed material, this is an artwork that plays with uncertainty as much as it does the beauty and aura of its protagonist and the progressive technology that serves as its aesthetic backdrop.

"Can you have artificial intelligence create art?" asks producer of the moving artwork Peter Muggleston. "This is artificial intelligence creating art because it is making the choice of what it could possibly show. "This is artificial intelligence creating art because it is the unity game engine making the creative

decision about which images will be shown. By combing coding and pre-rendered imagery we have been able to offer the artwork its own degree of autonomy." Muggleston and Fiennes combine intricately coded algorithms to create majestic moving images that perpetually self-generate in a continuous and unpredictable cycle. One easily becomes transfixed through the music and the charming quality is the film. "The inspiration behind *Yugen* resonates with the idea of the expression of a partially perceived universe," says Fiennes. "I consider myself a typical director in that I want to work with the inspiration of actors and talent and use their energy. Great actors can do a great deal by doing very little. With Salma, even though there is no dialogue in the film, there is an incredible charge from her presence, aura, projection and intelligence."

Starring Hayek as the lead figure with music developed by Magnus Fiennes, the film explores the idea of freedom through a moving and uncontrollable image. "I want to talk about freedom and giving people freedom [through this film]—that's when the magic happens."

As Hayek seconds, there's something "magical" about *Yugen*. "It was more like becoming in tune with the energy of a vision," says Hayek. "Martha has such a level of clarity for something she couldn't see. This is a painting that is alive. Artificial intelligence is going to decide what you are going to see."

*Yugen* offers this uncertainty and at the same time an eerie sense of beauty—one that unites us as well as emancipates are cries for individuality and knowledge. "The idea was to take the principle of the moving image and hand an aspect of it over to an intelligence," says Fiennes. "I realised that I crafted a lot of it and then I handed it all over and then I trusted that something special was going to happen." [yugen.art](http://yugen.art)

Left and below: Stills from *Yugen* featuring Salma Hayek.

WORDS BY REBECCA ANNE PROCTOR



