



This is the genesis of Yao Jui-Chung's venture into crypto art. His solo exhibition at Tina Keng Gallery titled *Invidia* (the deadly sin of *Envy*) charts a journey through history, myth, and memory. A detour through wealth, fortune, and idolatry is worth the price of admission. Yao's major works with pen and ink on paper draw from classical paintings and Internet imagery, where Buddhist deities and mythological creatures mingle with hackers and UFOs. The series presented here extend Yao's mix of high- and low-brow folk customs and modern memes into the novel medium of NFTs.

The video performance *Moon-Block-Chain* (2023) documents Yao's crypto-currency initiation. The artist visited Hongludi Temple, a popular place of worship for wealth wishing in the mountains above Taipei, where he used a pair of moon blocks to pray for the private key to a crypto-currency wallet. This technique is described in detail in the accompanying *Divination Guide*.

There is a connection here between fortune-telling and mathematics. In the late 1600s, Leibniz analyzed the hexagrams of the *I Ching* as binary numerals. Moon blocks operate like a digital logic gate, only yielding a successful answer if the two blocks land with opposite sides up. Both divination and cryptography rely on the universe as a source of randomness, but differ by crediting fate or physics. Praying for wealth is as familiar to temple supplicants as it is to crypto-currency speculators.

The video performance is flanked by portraits of *Twelve Disciples* (2023) drawn from Yao's extensive iconography. The artist has re-incarnated the hierarchy of beings from his cosmology in a "meta-verse" of twelve echelons: Aliens, Gods, Saints, Immortals, A.I., Mutants, Humans, Fairies, Demons, Ghosts, Beasts, and Legendary Creatures. These disciples have assumed identities as voguish online avatars, mimicking popular PFP (profile-picture) projects like CryptoPunks and Bored Apes.

Perched at the entrance to the space is *YAO COIN* (2023), imitation money like the numismatic charms found in temples, called *mother coins* or *seed coins*. This currency represents the "tokenization" of the artist's spiritual and monetary worth.

NFTs are signs of a late "vulgar" culture with distinctive aesthetics and esoteric rituals. This resonates with Yao Jui-Chung's practice. An eternal skeptic and cynic can still have trust in science, belief in markets, and faith in the divine, when the temptation is there.

「擬聖空間」(ALTAR SPACE)，是藝術家姚瑞中進入加密藝術的創世紀起手式。藝術家在耿畫廊個展名為 *Invidia*——妒忌，七宗罪之一——以多幅畫作與雕塑，測繪他穿梭於歷史、神話與記憶間的旅程。而這同時也是藝術家對於財富、幸運、神靈的探索之旅。個展中的紙本筆墨繪畫，展現了藝術家自身對古典繪畫、網絡圖像的高度自覺，山水、佛典、神靈、神話與傳說生物、駭客、不明飛行物等等交織其中。而在此「擬聖空間」中，則展現了藝術家如何透過 NFTs 的新媒介特性，將「雅-俗」並存的俗民文化與當下的「迷因」流行文化合為一體。

「月筊鏈」(*Moon-Block-Chain*, 2023) 此一行為表演錄像作品，記錄了藝術家姚瑞中創建「加密貨幣錢包」的真實歷程。他親身前往新北市山上的烘爐地——此處是一極受歡迎的求財聖地，用一對月筊向福德正神祈求一組加密貨幣錢包的「私鑰」。此一實際操作方法，請參照「占卜指南」(*Divination Guide*) 的說明與指引。

占卜和數學之間，存在某種關連。十七世紀，數學家萊布尼茲便已運用二進制數字來解讀《易經》的卦象。而月筊的操作原理，與數位的邏輯閘是相同的——問訊後擲筊，只有當兩個筊是以相反的一面朝上時，才是一個可被接受的結果。占卜和密碼學，其實都源自宇宙的隨機性；只是前者將之歸因於命運，後者則歸因於物理。而祈求財富，之於向寺廟求財的信眾、與預測加密貨幣增值的投機者來說，其實是相當近似的行為。

「十二使徒」(*Twelve Disciples*, 2023) 是環繞在錄像作品兩側的十二幅數位畫作。藝術家自「姚氏圖像學」汲取出十二種級次的十二種生靈，使之轉世重生——外星人、神、覺聖、仙、人工智能、變種怪物、人、妖、魔、鬼、獸、傳說生物，以此創造出一個新的元宇宙觀。十二使徒也是姚氏創生的線上頭像與化身，擬仿了網路 PFP 計畫如 CryptoPunks、Bored Apes 等流行夯文化。

「姚幣」(*YAO COIN*, 2023) 安放在「擬聖空間」入口，金澄澄有如寺廟中自帶魔力的「錢母」或「種子幣」。姚幣象徵著藝術家將「精神」和「貨幣」價值融鑄為一體的行動，也就是將之「代幣化」。

NFTs 是近年新興「俗」文化的指標，展現了獨特的審美趣味和某種具神秘色彩的儀式感。姚瑞中的藝術和創作脈絡，也都與這些特質深有呼應。在這一位永遠的懷疑論者和犬儒者身上，我們仍看見他對科學信任、對市場信念、對神靈信仰的無盡探求——而那正是誘惑之所在。

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