

Dario Lanza

# Catharsis

NFT Generative Art project

The first long-structure evolutive art collection on the Blockchain

• **Catharsis**: from Greek *katharsis*, the purification and purgation of intense emotions primarily through art.

## What is *Catharsis*?

**Catharsis** is a NFT Generative Art project inspired by the passion and energy of the abstract expressionism movement.

This project was born with a challenge in mind: To write an algorithm capable of generating 999 pieces of digital art that doesn't feel geometric at all.

For me, art must convey a feeling. With **Catharsis** I seek to empower the viewer by facing a fresh picture, full of energy and passion, produced after a creative delirium similar to a catharsis.

Improvisation... gesture... liberation...

In the rhythm of the work you can perceive the tension between containment and lack of control. Here the term 'improvisation' fits better than 'randomness'. My work is to design a symphony of great dimensions and then let the algorithm improvise on each piece, deciding where the improvisation leads. Beforehand I can't predict if the piece is going to be a melodic passage or a drum-solo percussive collision.



## Between realism and abstraction

A particular feature of this project is its realistic approach to abstraction, where traditionally both concepts have always been considered polar opposites in art studies.

The eye is invited to endlessly explore the hundreds of random and beautiful small accidents that give the paint a physical experience. The canvas fabric, the drops, the splashes, the "impasto", the lumps of thick paint, all take on a tangible quality intended to draw the viewer into an abstract state of mind.

You can feel it, you can almost touch it.

## The beauty is in the process

Following the ideas of the abstract expressionists, the process is as important as the final artwork itself.

In **Catharsis** the animation of the paint being dripped across the canvas becomes as hypnotic and fascinating as the final picture.

That is why I would like to exhibit in Arte Laguna Prize, in addition to a sample of static physical prints, the algorithm itself, running on a screen and permanently "painting" different artworks live.

I believe it would be great to exhibit it working.

Some videos showing the algorithm running can be seen here:

- [www.gmstudio.art/live-render?slug=catharsis&tokenId=551](http://www.gmstudio.art/live-render?slug=catharsis&tokenId=551)
- [www.gmstudio.art/live-render?slug=catharsis&tokenId=955](http://www.gmstudio.art/live-render?slug=catharsis&tokenId=955)
- [www.gmstudio.art/live-render?slug=catharsis&tokenId=759](http://www.gmstudio.art/live-render?slug=catharsis&tokenId=759)

## Launchment and repercussion

**Catharsis** was launched in September 2022 with a huge critics, collectors and even economic success: all the 999 artworks were sold out in 6 hours, a quarter of a million euros generated on the first day and close to another million euros generated on the secondary market during the first month.

A large part of the repercussion that this project has had is due to the innovations in its design, such as the idea of evolutionary algorithm or the notion of long-structure, which had not been done in NFT generative projects to date.

An essay about the project, written and published by Wes Hazard, can be read here:

*"Catharsis. Appreciating the seen & unseen in Dario Lanza's generative canvases":*

<https://medium.com/gmdao/catharsis-appreciating-the-seen-unseen-in-dario-lanzas-generative-canvases-339a729de698>

## What is new in *Catharsis*?

### Individual titles

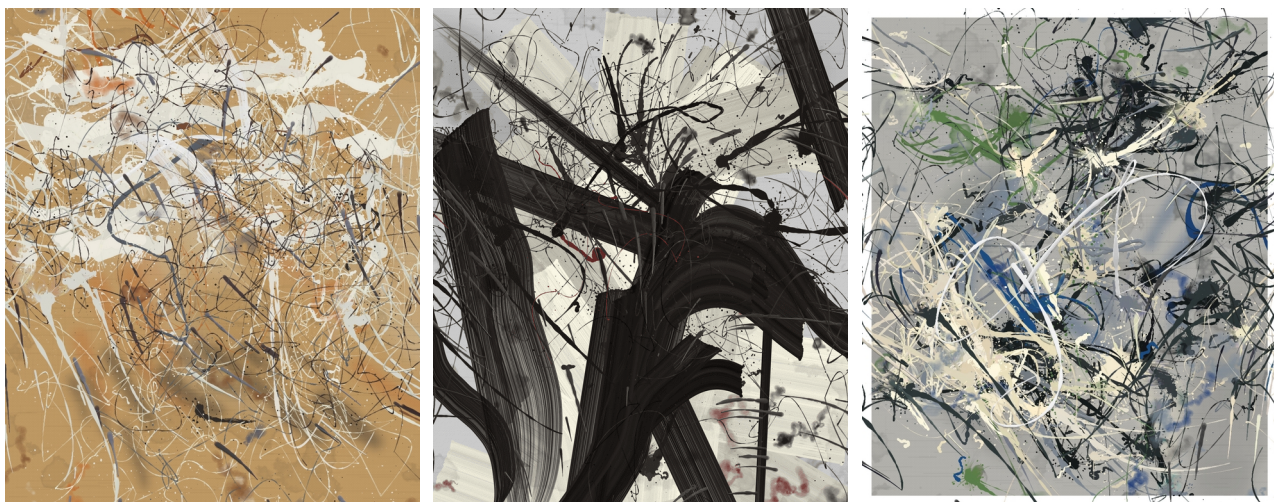
In **Catharsis** each and every artwork presents an individual and unique title, corresponding to the most influential jazz pieces in history. This is the first time a NFT generative art project provides titles to the individual pieces, and these titles definitely help the artworks to gain depth and meaning, providing a closer repationship between the viewer and the artwork.

### Evolutive code

**Catharsis** is the first evolutive code on the Blockchain. Following the increasing energy on a cathartic episode, the style of these outputs evolves from the beginning of the series to the final artworks. Starting with a less dense and timid mood, the project evolves towards a more energetic style, involving more paint on the pieces, and applying it with greater ferocity. New features and high density rarities appear as the series progresses, and new color palettes show up.

This makes the whole linear collection into a big artwork itself, each piece representing one step in the incremental cathartic release of creativity.

Instead of a static code that may produce the same kind of outputs throughout the entire series, with the same likelihood of singularities, features, styles and color schemes, **Catharsis** represents the first time an algorithm mutates, changes, evolves on the Blockchain while it is being executed, establishing a new dimension to contemporary art production hitherto unexplored.



Timidly becoming wild. Outputs at the beginning of the series





Evolving style by an evolutive algorithm. Outputs at the end of the series

### Long-structure

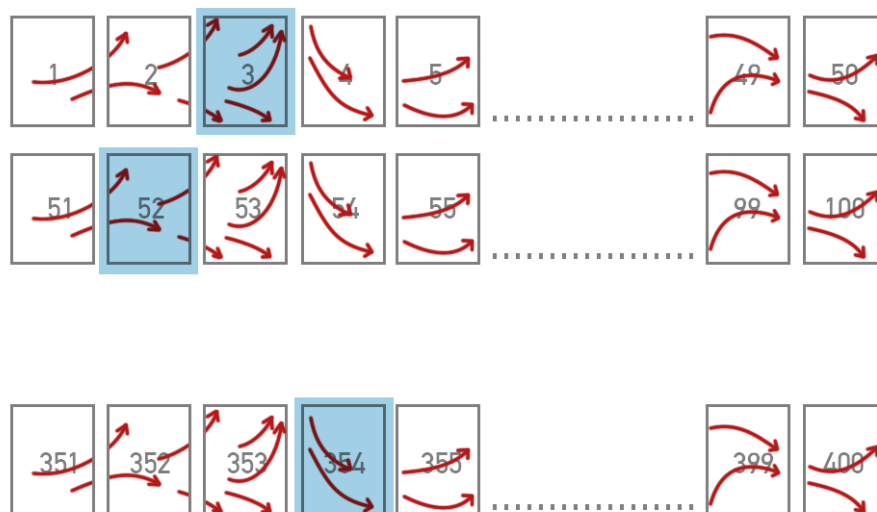
Today we are familiar with the term "long-form", coined by Tyler Hobbs to define the way in which now generative artists must design their projects, not working over each piece individually, but planning and projecting large collections of artworks with a high demand for variability between them.

In a concept that goes beyond the idea of the "long-form", **Catharsis** not only proposes a large-scale design with a great variability of outputs, but an entire collection that has been designed around a global structure that allows the pairing of different artworks into diptychs and triptychs.

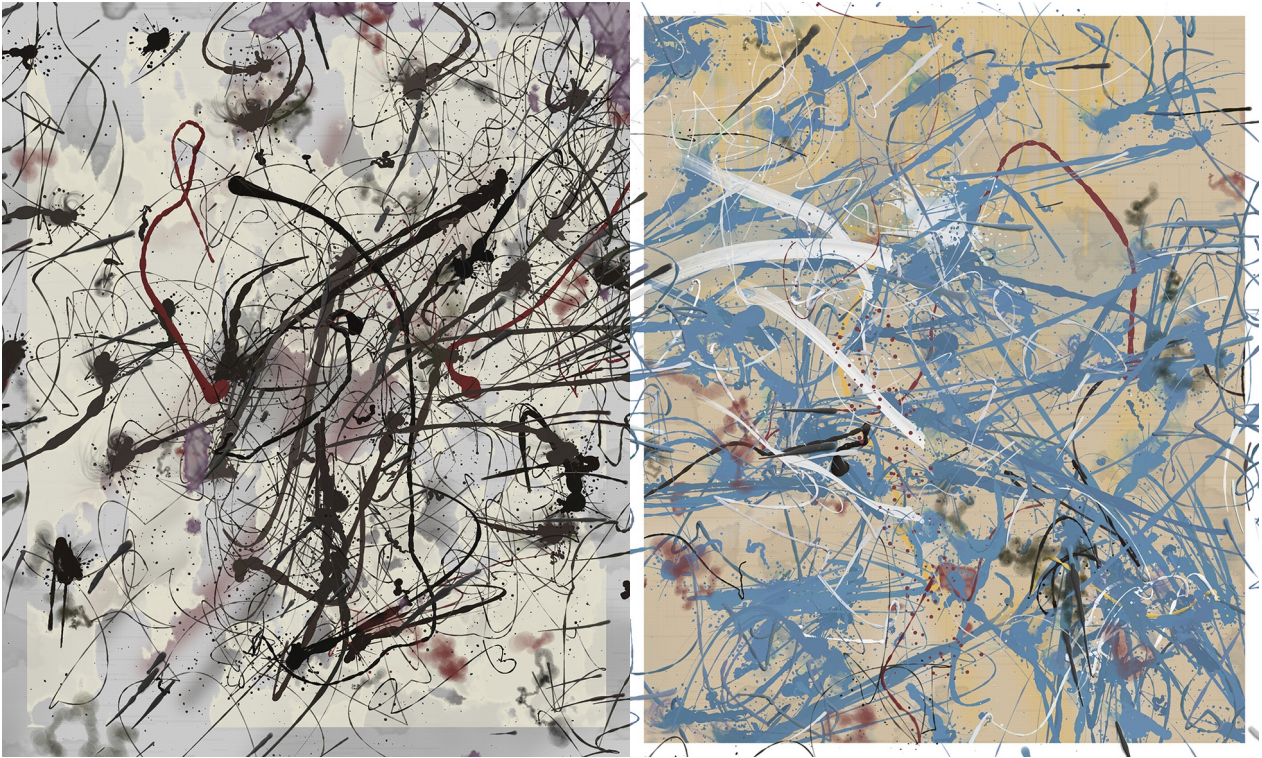
Instead of each piece being solved individually on its own visual space, independent from the rest of the project, the paint cast in one **Catharsis** artwork continues and extends into the next work, whose painting in turn invades the following one, producing a global flow that runs through the entire project, on a beautiful structure designed on a gigantic scale.

This implies that, while the paint is thrown in chaotic and unpredictable ways in all the pieces, the work, for example number #121, presents continuity on both sides with works #120 and #122, and can thus be collected together to produce a triptych.

However, in order to broaden the possibilities of the collection, I managed to design the whole continuity around a 50-works structure, which implies that artwork #121 will also present continuity with piece #172, or with #222 or #272, #322, #372... greatly increasing the collecting dynamics of this project.



Chaos, randomness and structure. Pairing a triptych on the 50-pieces structure



Diptych showing paint continuity between *Catharsis test #192* (left) and *Catharsis test #243* (right)  
Notice the general common paint movement and amazing effect of paint strokes physically continuing from one artwork into the other

### Innovations

**Catharsis** is not just an aesthetic exploration aimed to digitally mimick the human touch. We can be pretty sure that we will see more continuities and evolutive generative projects after **Catharsis**, a project that is already renown for marking a before and after in today digital artistic creation.



## The artist

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Digital artist and Professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts. Complutense University of Madrid (Spain)

- 2022 – Curated artist at GMStudio: <https://www.gmstudio.art/collections/catharsis>
- 2022 - NFT Collection in Foundation: <https://foundation.app/collection/visionsoftheinfinity>
- 2021 - Published book chapter: (Dario Lanza et al.): *“Real Possibility of an Entirely Open-Source Pipeline for Indie Games Design and Production. Altamira Game as a Case Study”*. Springer Series in Design and Innovation.
- 2021 - Paper approved, pending publication (Dario Lanza): *“Hand Painted Movie Stills: A Study of the Aesthetics of the Cinematographic Space in Painted Scenography”*. New Review of Film and Television Studies. ISSN: 1740-0390
- 2021 - Paper (Dario Lanza): *“From the Opening Sequence of Citizen Kane to the Final Shot of The Birds. A Filmic Microanalysis of Three Painted Scenes”*. Journal of Film and Video, Vol. 73 N.o 1, Spring 2021. ISSN: 0742-4671.
- 2020 - Paper (Dario Lanza): *“Brushstroke Cinema: The Concept of Matte Painting in the Work of Peter Ellenshaw and Albert Whitlock”*. Film History. An International Journal, Vol. 32 N.o 2. ISSN: 0892-2160.
- 2017 - PhD in Information and Communication Technology
- 2014 - Paper (Dario Lanza): *“A Perspective on the Role of Computers on Art: A Model of Integration of Computers in the Production of Contemporary Art”*. Lovotics Journal. DOI: 10.4172/ 2090-9888.1000110
- 2014 - *“Visions of the Infinity number 6”* exhibited at Los Angeles Center for Digital Art
- 2013 - *“Visions of the Infinity number 4”* finalist at the Lumen Prize Awards. Exhibited in New Your, Hong Kong, London, Athens and Cardiff.
- More about Catharsis, the artist and previous digital art projects: [www.dariolanza.com](http://www.dariolanza.com)