Artist Statement

In my work, I employ AI technology to create hyper realistic representations of collective and individual memories within Japanese society. This approach transcends mere replication of reality, aiming to explore the universal theme of defining human nature across past, present, and future.

Born in 1990 as part of the digital-native generation, I'm fascinated by the era when mass media had the strongest influence (1950s to early 2000s). By examining this period's allure and dissonance, I critique rapidly evolving technologies in the modern day through the lens of retro-futurism. This theme has been a consistent focus in my work, including my musical journey with Satellite Young and pre-AI installations.

I primarily create photographs, video art, and installations using generative AI tools like Stable Diffusion. By merging algorithmic uncertainty with my artistic vision, I question the role of the artist in the AI era. I view machines as creative partners in exploring the significance and vulnerability of being human.

In contrast to the "abstraction of reality" techniques employed in Japanese anime and manga, my work depicts reality. My inaugural AI art series, "Neural Fad," portrays Japan's unique street culture hacking large language models biased towards Western culture. "Melancholic Magical Maiden" is a multi-faceted approach to examining gender perspectives in 90s magical girl and robot anime. Through these anime-inspired motifs, I attempt to symbolize post-war guilt and patriarchy in Japan from a critical point of view. Many of my pieces incorporate self-portraits generated by training AI on my own facial data, allowing me to investigate how information technology influences identity formation.

In our current AI era, the boundary between truth and fiction is becoming exponentially ambiguous, with an overwhelming flood of information beyond our cognitive capacity. While this may seem to promise a dystopian future, there are more pressing matters for discussion. We might be the last generation capable of sharing such intense nostalgia. Using my art as a common language for discourse, I encourage a reevaluation of the present time.

Liminality (2024)

This body of work draws inspiration from artist Emi Kusano's childhood dream journals, the dazzling contrasts of early 2000s pop culture, video games, and myths from across time and around the world. The resulting series vividly depicts a surreal world that transcends conventional boundaries. The unexpected, fantastical images created through collaboration with AI evoke nostalgia and reminiscence in viewers.

Employing her own AI processing technique, these collage-like AI photographs emerge from repeated adjustments of noise reduction "sampling steps" and re-upscaling processes. The images explore the ambiguous realm where dreams and reality intersect. Through the transformation of reality perception brought about by AI, a new world of perception comes to life, inhabited by ever-changing, amorphous landscapes and fluid human figures.

The collection arises from Kusano's aesthetic vision, which continually explores the interplay between AI-generated visuals and fragments of human recollection. Incorporating elements of surrealism and automatism, it reflects the artist's unique creative process and inner world. Through dialogue with AI, Kusano woven from unexpected creativity, pursuing new possibilities in artistic expression woven from memory and technology.

https://www.emikusano.art/liminality

https://www.emikusano.art/liminality
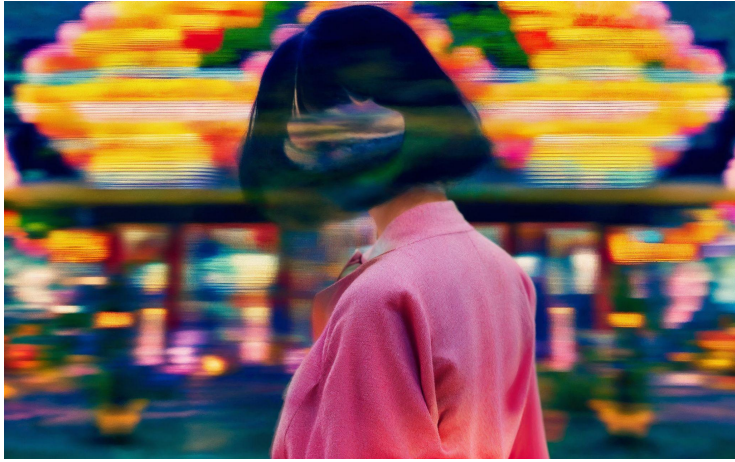
The Altar of Bonnō (2024)

Bonnō is the Buddhist concept that embodies the blind passions that drive our actions and emotions. The pervasive material desires driven by these passions are the subject of this generative AI series, displayed in the form of various overindulgences that tempt daily actions right up to the altars of worship.Feeding from an amalgam of Japanese culture, western influence, and Buddhist traditions and symbolism – the sheer density of material defilements expressed in these works are a widespread phenomena of contemporary life throughout the world. Their hold on our field of view conveys the troubling complexities that seek to impede the attainment of spiritual harmony. worship.This series is a study of fictional lives in a retro-future world, imagined by Kusano using artificial intelligence image-making processes, real photography, and digital painting.

https://verse.works/series/the-altar-of-bonno-emi-kusano

COGNITIVE CHAOS: WIRED REALITIES (2024)

COGNITIVE CHAOS: WIRED REALITIES by Emi Kusano is a self-portrait created with AI that provokes thoughts about a future where AI and human thought processes might merge. The aesthetic is reminiscent of the cover of a 1970s Japanese occult magazine. It is both fantastical and slightly eerie. Kusano explores the complex dynamics between technology and humanity, order and chaos, and the internal and external worlds.

https://verisart.com/works/emi-kusano-0b3641df-052c-4334-8863-2373ffa506eb#more-details
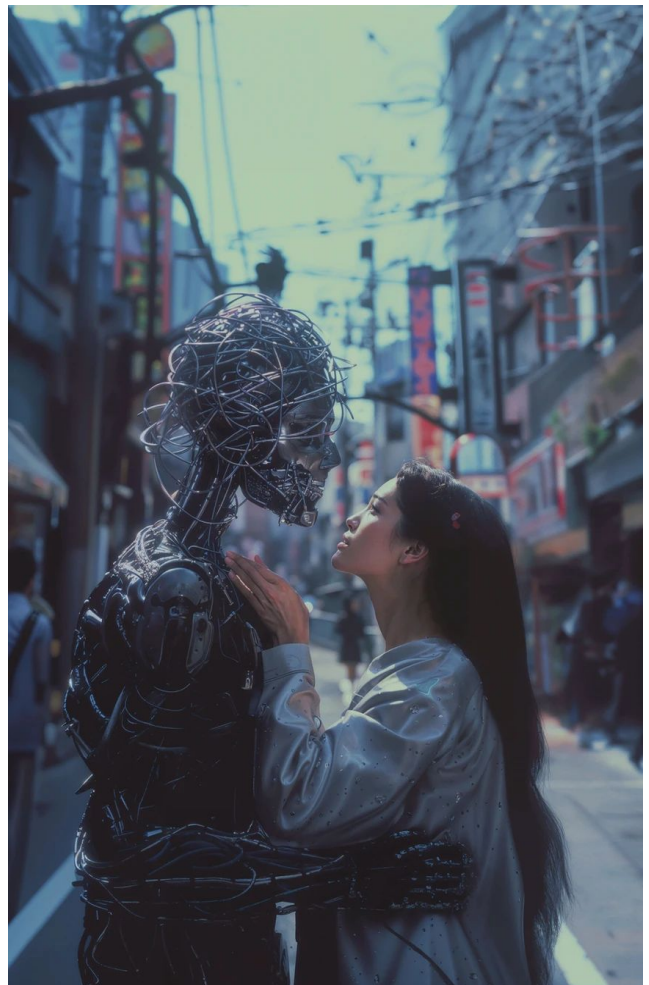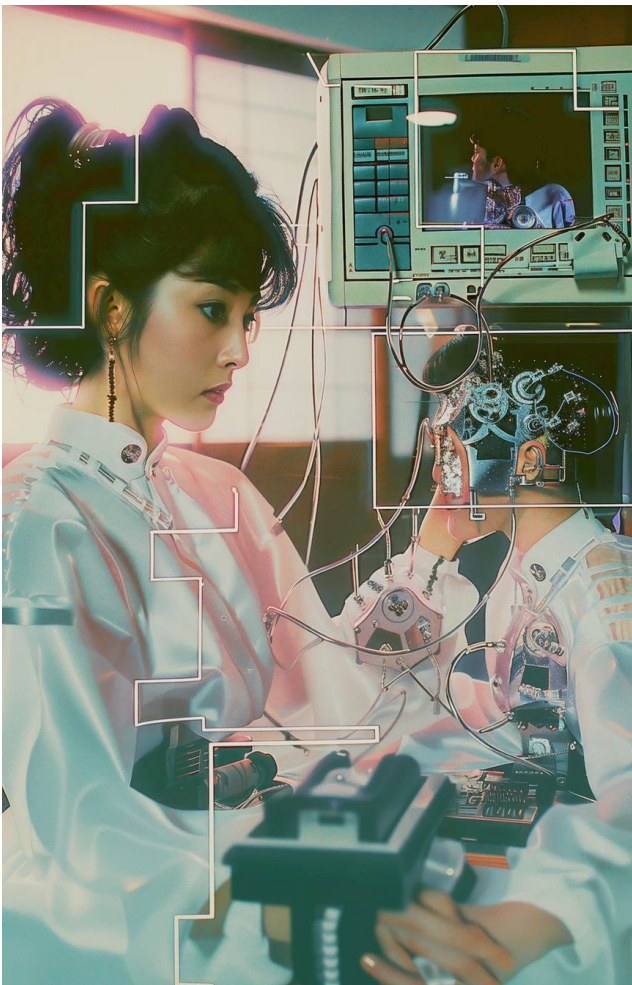
COGNITIVE CHAOS (2024)

COGNITIVE CHAOS by the Japanese artist Emi Kusano is a series of 33 AI-generated images that venture into the nostalgia of a future once imagined, where brains are directly connected to devices—a concept familiar from science fiction but now echoing with new significance.

As AI blurs the boundaries of truth, COGNITIVE CHAOS contemplates the resurgence of tangible sensations like texture and scent. It invites viewers to explore the balance between technology and the natural world, urging a rediscovery of our sensory experiences amidst the cognitive chaos.

Kusano encourages introspection on the interplay between our changing perceptions and the evolving digital landscape, advocating for a mindful engagement with the world around us.


https://www.expanded.art/collections/emi-kusano-cognitive-chaos

https://www.expanded.art/collections/emi-kusano-cognitive-chaos

Melancholic Magical Maiden (2024)

Melancholic Magical Maiden deconstructs the aesthetics of the 'magical girl' genre from 90's anime, where girls who possess magical abilities typically use them through an ideal alter ego into which they can transform. Emi Kusano reexamines these archetypal heroines, critically analyzing their impact on shaping gender and societal perceptions, and offers a contemporary reinterpretation of these narratives.

Kusano's artwork reveals the duality of magic and reality, mirroring her childhood memories with magical girls. Utilizing a palette of subtle colors and nuanced text, she objectively interprets the nostalgic charm of classic anime alongside an insightful critique of societal constructs, forging a distinct visual language that encourages viewers to ponder the influence of childhood aspirations on their adult identity.

https://opensea.io/collection/melancholic-magical-maiden-by-emi-kusano
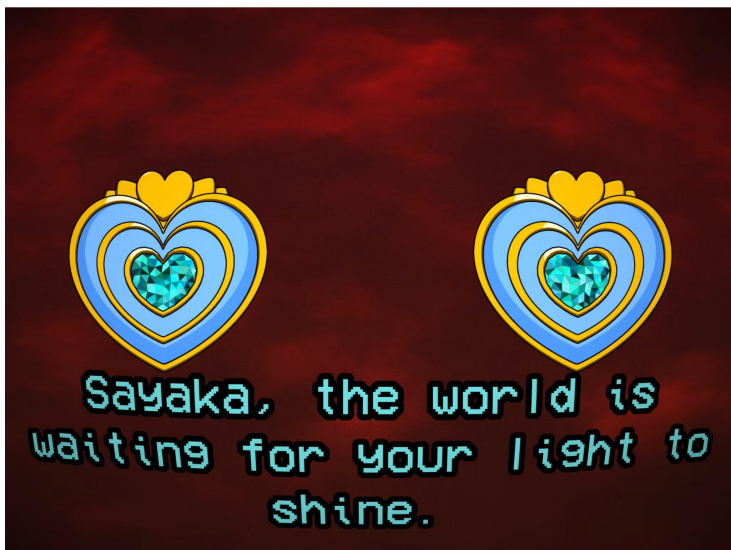
Techno Animism (2023)

In the crucible of Japan's cultural imagination, where every object is believed to house a spirit, and technology is embraced not as a foe but as a companion, the series "Techno-Animism" manifests as a profound exploration of this symbiosis. These Long-Form AI Works are a testament to the seamless integration of Japan's animistic beliefs with its forward-thinking embrace of technology. Here, kami—the spirits of Japan—do not reside in the forests or temples alone but also in the silicon and circuits of the robots and digital entities that populate these works. These creations are not just mere reflections of the natural world but are also infused with the life-force that Japanese culture perceives in all things, animate and inanimate alike. This collection is a canvas where past and future coalesce, where the essence of eternal Japan is interwoven with threads of a time yet to come. It's a narrative that unfolds in the interplay of light and shadow, a dance of the metaphysical with the tangible, resonating deeply with the ethos of harmony that is central to the Japanese way of life. Each work in "Techno-Animism" is an invitation to witness a world where the boundaries between man, machine, and nature blur, proposing a future where technology augments our reality, not detracts from it—a future where we move forward hand in hand with the very essence of life that animates us all.

https://opensea.io/collection/techno-animism-by-emi-kusano

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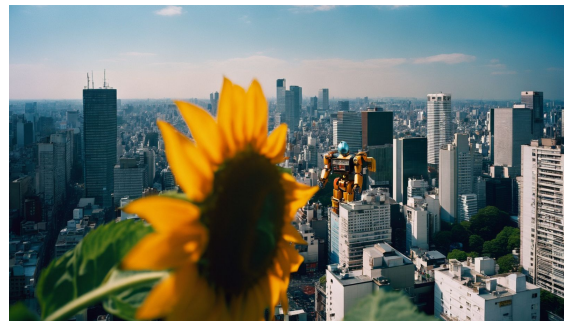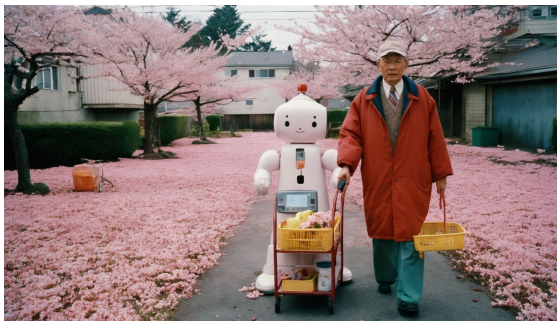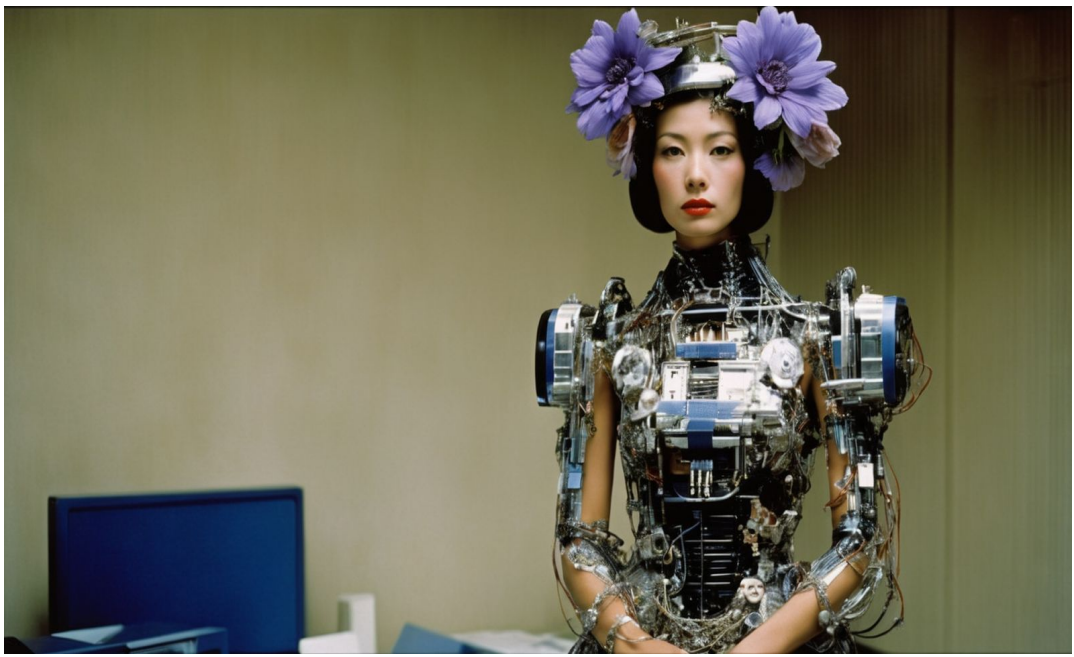
Morphing Memory of Neural Fad (2023)

"Morphing Memory" series reimagines Tokyo street fashion history and analyzes the connection between AI and memory. Based on Kusano's "Neural Fad" post-photography collection, this video series visualizes the youth's nonexistent rebellious spirit and seamlessly transitions through eras. Detailed camera work and dynamic movement immerse viewers in digital scenes, accompanied by music that captures the unique atmosphere of fashion from different times. Before the digital era, local magazines and TV were the catalysts for youth movements, shaping the Moga and Mobo of the 1940s to the Japanese hippies known as the Fūten Tribe, the Karasu Tribe of the 80s, and the Gyaru and Decora fashion of the late 90s and early 2000s. Amid today's information overload and mass fashion consumption, this artwork attempts to reconsider AI's role in reviving the history of street style once shaped by localized media.



https://www.emikusano.art/morphingmemory

Pixelated Perception (2023)

"Pixelated Perception" explores the complex confluence of the digital and the tangible, highlighting the diverse transitions in Japan. In the 1990s, pixels, the minute elements of the digital realm, emerged prominently in platforms like mobile phone communications and instances of censorship, subtly altering our perception of reality. Using AI generation, Kusano crafts portraits of individuals who, though they don't exist in fact, resonate profoundly in our memories and senses, employing the pixelated effect as a symbolic presence.

Pixels signify the fragmented pieces of our identity and understanding in this digital era. This work's aesthetic, reminiscent of video games, questions the overly pop-consumed roles of men and women, suggesting that these roles are, after all, fictional constructs.

This glitch prompts us to reflect on the interplay between reality and the virtual, encouraging a reevaluation of our perspectives and the freedom to envision differently.

https://opensea.io/collection/pixelated-perception
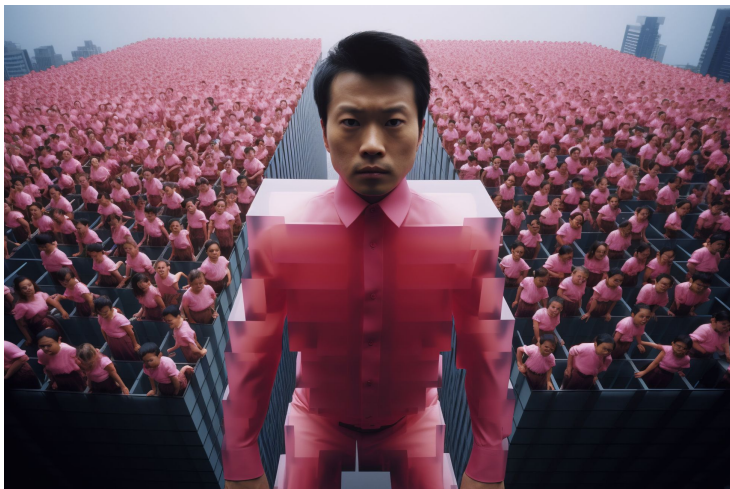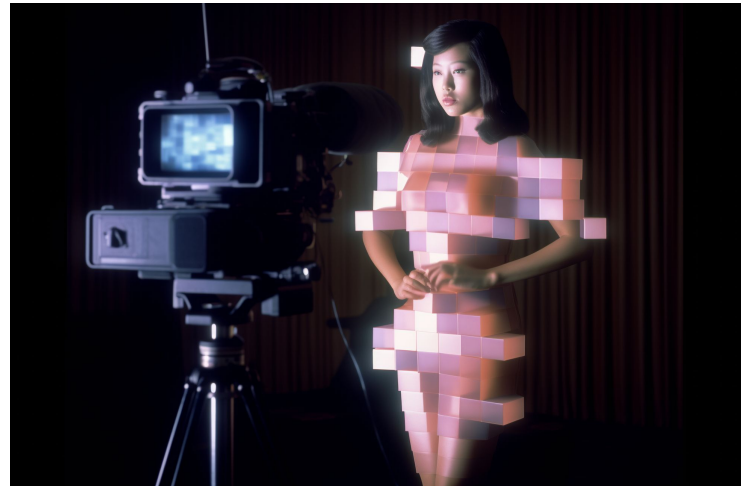
Filter Bubble Euphoria (2023)

In the early days of the internet, a lone teenager —the artist—found comfort in the digital cosmos. This online place subtly mirrored her journey, becoming a unique universe she felt connected to. In this sanctuary, she discovered bright spots of understanding and Wonder.

Filter Bubble Euphoria embodies her nostalgia for the time when cyberspace was in its genesis, a period of simplicity and limitless connections before the age of algorithmic isolations.

https://opensea.io/collection/filter-bubble-euphoria-by-emi-kusano

Synthetic Reflection (2023)

Synthetic Reflections is a self-portrait series by Emi Kusano, accumulating visions of the future once imagined by the past and lyrically illustrating their unique anticipations towards the technology of their times. In an era of post-truth where AI shapes identity, Emi, through her work, explores the impacts of this technological revolution and the timeless human desire to leave an imprint on oneself.

Each piece captures Kusano in a retro-futuristic world, an alternate universe where echoes of past dreams and future visions blend. They evoke a unique blend of nostalgia and boldness. Imagine a magazine cover where classic and modern fashion photography intertwines, stimulating a dialogue between the observer and the self-portrait that transcends time.

Questioning the significance of self-image in a mutable reality formed by generative AI, these portraits evolve into dynamic reflections of our identity, perpetually inquiring about the meaning of self-immortality.

 "Synthetic Reflections" merges art, technology, and fashion, navigating the duality of personal and universal, transitory and eternal. Welcome to this journey that reflects the pursuit of identity in a post-truth world. Despite our era being synthetic, it stands testament to the enduring human desire to be seen, understood, and remembered.


https://rb.gy/xsfs76

Shinjitai (2023)

3D Digital Dress

Collaboration with Claire Silver For Gucci x Christie's Auction

Shinjitai was digitally hand-sculpted and textured with AI-Collaborative art, combining advanced mathematics and aesthetics of ancient paintings and tapestries. Disassembled to purest form--shapes and colors--it was then arranged as abstract collage, glowing and dancing over the fabric.

https://nft.christies.com/nft/shinjitai
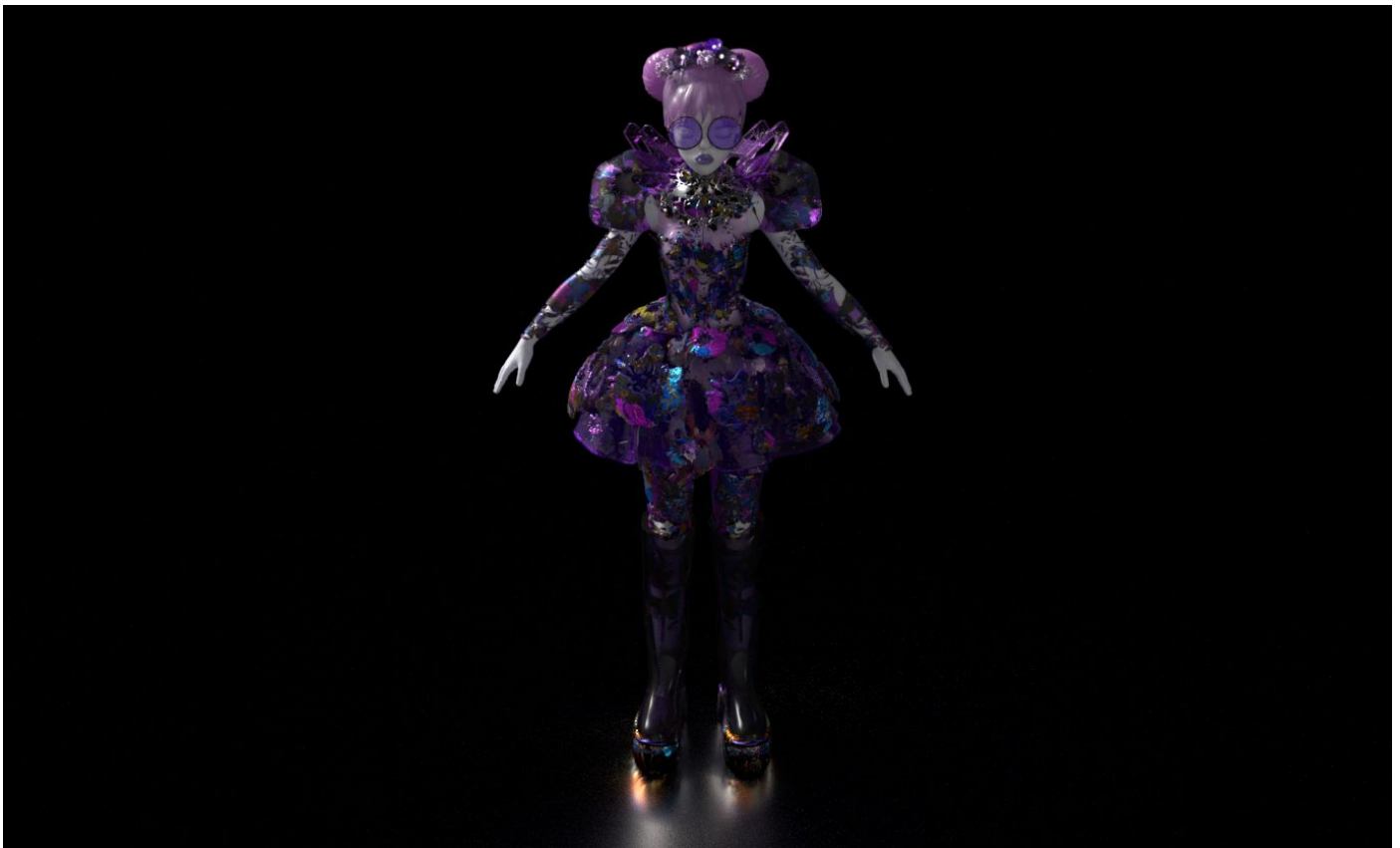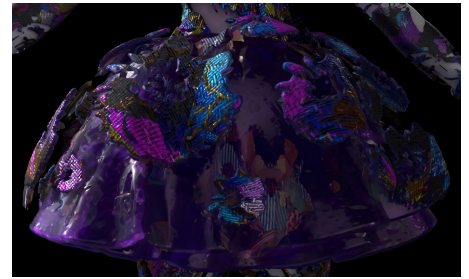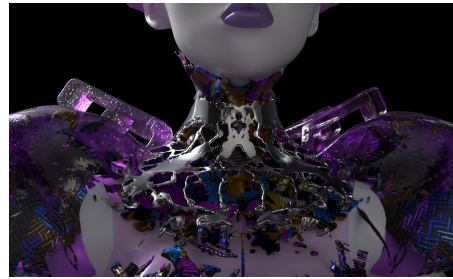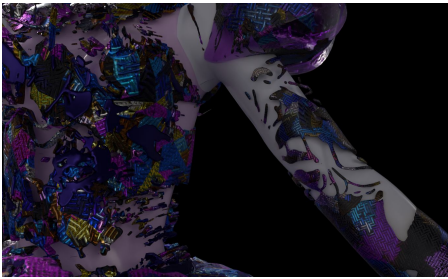
Neural Fad (2023)

Neural Fad reimagines Tokyo street fashion history to examine the relationship between AI and memory.

In post-war Japan, distinctive magazines and television cultivated an aspirational youth culture that gave rise to unique fashion subcultures at different train stations around Tokyo. Inspired by the rebellious spirit of each generation and their projections towards an imagined future, Kusano produces records of subcultures that never actually existed.

Reimagining the rich vocabulary and history of Tokyo street fashion through AI, the collection takes the viewer across and beyond the post-war decades of Japanese fashion history — from the Moga and Mobo of the 1940s to the Japanese hippies known as the Fūten Tribe, the Karasu Tribe of the 90s and the Gyaru and Decora fashion of the late 90s and early 2000 — to present Tokyo street fashion as imagined beyond time.

Through this collaboration between AI and Japanese street fashion archives that she herself contributed to as a street photographer of Harajuku fashion, Kusano uses emerging technologies to offer a retro-futuristic intervention into the landscape of Tokyo street fashion.

https://opensea.io/collection/neural-fad-by-emi-kusano

https://opensea.io/collection/neural-fad-by-emi-kusano