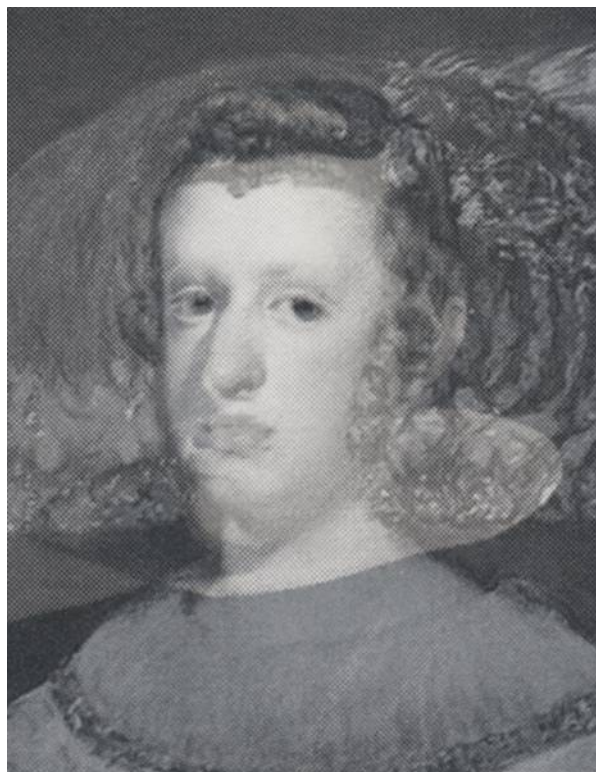


# THEODORE:ART

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## MICHELLE VAUGHAN

### Generations



**February 26 – April 3, 2016**

**Reception for the artist Friday February 26, 6-9pm**

*I am just a copy of a copy of a copy  
Everything I say has come before  
- Nine Inch Nails "Copy of a"*

Theodore:Art is pleased to present an exhibition of recent work by New York-based artist Michelle Vaughan. This will be Vaughan's first solo show at the gallery.

Vaughan's oeuvre investigates topics such as power, politics and history, with every possible ramification and aspect brought into play in aesthetic form. A museum obsessive, Vaughan peers through the lens of "important" and lesser works of art to examine deep topical issues that connect art to uncovered histories. Diego Velázquez, and his apprentices, Juan Carreño de Miranda and Juan Bautista Martínez del Mazo, created portraits of the family of King Philip IV (1605-1665) that have seduced and dazzled viewers for centuries, but the lesser-known aspect of the Habsburgs, as well as much of European nobility of that era, is for Vaughan the most fascinating and the most horrifying.

New information can create contradictions to everything known before. As European countries expanded and ruled much of the Western World, the nobility in command played with genetic fire and their own survival in the quest for the purest blue blood. Tightly woven intermarrying over several centuries was no accident -- it served to strengthen, not weaken, the power of the court. The Habsburgs were committed to keeping control of Europe, whatever the cost.

Habsburgs, Bourbons, Bavarians and leading houses of Europe arranged all marriages and many were first cousins. But the 17th c. Habsburg family had extraordinary high levels of shared genetics — there were two sequential uncle-niece marriages after a strain of intermarrying prior to these unions. As a result, their inbreeding coefficient numbers ranged higher than offspring produced by a brother and sister. Genetically it is problematic to be over 25% inbred, but some of this family was 50%-75%.

Vaughan's exhibition consists of digitally manipulated portraits of the family of King Philip IV -- ten members of the Spanish-Austrian Habsburg dynasty spanning four generations, as well as grids depicting uncle-niece unions, animated GIFs of the original portraits, and drawings which are copies of those GIFs. The work is a series of copies; Vaughan selected web images where the original source is often unknown, then removed digital information and copied multiple times, in different media.

This process mirrors the activity of reproducing offspring with high inbreeding coefficients due to intermarrying. Chromosome strands show repeated genetic information, creating a degraded immune system and a much higher chance of disorder and disease.

The development of this body of work also replicates the reproduction of court portraits in the atelier. The artist's apprentice copied an original, then the workshop of the artist produced more of those copies, attributed to "The Studio of ..." But after distribution, lesser artists continued the copying, and several of those interpretations still remain, copies of copies of copies.

Michelle Vaughan received her BFA at UCLA. Her art practice focuses on political or historical subjects: she examines topics and then deconstructs and reinterprets the material through her work. Vaughan has had solo shows at Dumbo Art Center and the South Street Seaport, where she was awarded fiscal sponsorship from the New York Foundation of the Arts for Sea Warriors: A Public Art Project, in 2009. Vaughan was born in Anaheim, California and lives in New York City.

For information and images please contact the gallery at 212 966 4324 or [theodoreart@gmail.com](mailto:theodoreart@gmail.com)