Justin Mortimer (b. 1970)

Dog
2010
Oil on canvas
Santa Barbara Museum of Art
Gift of Elizabeth and Steven Blatt
2023.33

Much like Mortimer's controversial portrait of Elizabeth II with her head floating away from her body, this painting's atmosphere is disturbing and menacing: a bed, a dark storage space piled with stuff, a cast iron stove, plastic hoses, a garbage bag, and a person, probably a man, crawling on the bed. The clean, brilliant white sheets seem like ones from a hospital, making the whole scene even more unsettling. Mortimer began this painting by collaging from cut-up magazines. He scanned the collage into Photoshop to experiment with different compositions. He then took brush to canvas, modifying and adjusting along the way. Perhaps these preparatory digital steps helped him to paint with more confidence.

Ena Swansea (b. 1966)

area code 2019
2019
Oil and acrylic on linen
Santa Barbara Museum of Art
Museum purchase with funds from Kandy Budgor; Luria/Budgor Family Foundation
2023.49

In this composition, ambiguity about the time of day hints at the disparate sources from which the artist drew. Swansea's process begins by perusing the more than 80,000 digital photographs she has taken with an iPhone and archived on her computer. This painting unites some of her interests: the once ubiquitous phone booth, the deciduous forests of the eastern United States, an abandoned NASCAR racetrack in North Carolina, and her son, the child in the booth.
As she shared recently, she starts by looking at photographs on the computer monitor and "stays in that world until it becomes clear to me what the image will be. Only then is it translated out of the digital realm into the studio." She does not directly copy the photographs onto the canvas; instead, they serve as a digital mood board, stimulating her mind and guiding but not dictating how she paints.

Alex Heilbron (b. 1987)

Dictation
2023
Acrylic on canvas on panel
Courtesy of the artist's studio

Phonemic
2023
Acrylic on canvas on panel
Courtesy of the artist's studio

On a canvas, Heilbron re-creates layer upon layer of patterns and colors that we encounter on computer screens, and she mimics the visual confusion of scrolling and clicking. Graphic design programs turn images into layers, each of which may be manipulated, and the stacked quality of these layers comes through in both paintings. A marker-like effect disrupts the narrative of each image.

Heilbron shares her method:

> Each painting was planned out in layers in [Adobe] Photoshop. Each layer was imported to [Adobe] Illustrator to create a stencil file, which would be compatible for printing on a vinyl cutter. After being cut on a vinyl cutter, the stencils are applied to the canvas and prepped for paint application. Once one stencil layer is complete, it is removed and the acrylic paint positive is visible. The next stencil is placed on the canvas, and the process is repeated. The acrylic paint is applied with a variety of tools: paint roller, poured, paint, or foam brush. The color and opacity of each layer can change if needed. If you look carefully, you can see all of the layers on the painting.

Taha Heydari (b. 1986)

Reterritorialization
2023
Acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of Jack Barrett Gallery & the artist

Given the weird juxtapositions in this painting—a greenhouse with water pouring in, lawn furniture, a nude person stretched out—it is unsurprising that the artist started from an AI-generated image, a source that he modified as he painted. Like many unconvincing AI images, something feels off, but it takes a moment to know exactly what. This uncanny feeling plays a role for Heydari, who says that his paintings' blurs and perplexing subjects come from his need to pull apart the totalizing ideology of contemporary Iran, where he grew up before coming to the United States to obtain a master's degree in art:

> As a member of the generation that emerged following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, I incorporate different modes of mark-making to reveal and deconstruct the binaries that have shaped my identity: East and West, body and soul, past and future.

The way in which the painting holds together initially but then ultimately crumbles offers a visual parable for how anyone might move away from the binaries of ideologies.

Analia Saban (b. 1980)

Pleated Ink (Music Synthesizer: Max/MSP, 1996)
2020
Ink on panel
Courtesy the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York/Los Angeles

Saban's drawing depicts a computer screen running a music synthesizer program using Max/MSP (mix signal processing). Released in 1996, this innovative program uses a visual programming language, or block coding. Rather than typing lines of commands, the user moves blocks around and connects them with lines to link functions. Here, the artist's hand transforms the familiar experience of staring at a pristine computer monitor. Wisps of ink look like fine bits of cotton candy pulled across the surface. Their presence heightens the painting's connection to a person holding a tool to apply ink. They recall the goopy unruliness of paints and inks that artists contend with—wholly unlike interactions with a computer, with its clicks, drags, and keystrokes.

Yassi Mazandi (b. 1962)

Nine
2013
Unique Born-Porcelain, geopolymer-bound dolomite stone, casein-based coating
Santa Barbara Museum of Art
Gift of Beth Rudin DeWoody
2023.40

Mazandi calls her sculptures in this series "flowers," but they also resemble vertebrae, coral, or the mineralized shells of microscopic diatoms. This work began as clay thrown on a potter's wheel that Mazandi then carved and fired. She scanned in the ur-form of *Nine*, enlarged the digital image, and 3D printed it with an experimental machine that uses pulverized stone bonded with a magnesium compound. As a final step, Mazandi brushed on a coating to heighten the nubby texture, as if *Nine* had been submerged in the ocean and coated with accretions of barnacles. The sculpture is stone, albeit spit out from the nozzle of a printer, but it resembles the mineral deposits of an arcane biological or geological process.

These are the front and back of a hand-thrown and hand-carved “flower” that Mazandi made from English porcelain. This was placed in a CT scanner, which uses X-rays, to build a digital file.

This is an photograph of the sculpture being printed with a stereolithography machine. The printer deposits dolomitic stone powder and a magnesium-based binding agent. These two bond together—a process that can be compared to cement or plaster heating up and becoming harder—to create the stone sculpture in this exhibition. Stereolithography (SLA) is a technology that has not been widely adopted. The standard 3D printers used today use fused filament fabrication, in which thin, flexible rods of plastic are heated to a liquid or workable paste and deposited by the printer with a nozzle. Mazandi coats the entire sculpture with a casein (milk-protein) paint to make it feel nubby and natural.

Sarah Rosalena (b. 1982)

Exit Grid
2023
Hand-dyed wool and cotton yarn
Courtesy of the artist

For this woven textile, the artist employed Indigenous dyeing techniques and a computerized Jacquard loom. Here, Sarah Rosalena (Wixárika) makes a powerful statement about the disconnect of mathematics from human experience and the natural world. The grid, a geometric pattern, can be a tool not only to explain and rationalize but also to oppress and control. As the artist puts it, "There's a way you can rewrite or insert multiplicities in science and technology, in a way that decenters it and puts it in a new perspective." Using bands of pixelated color and a loose weave, Rosalena has added glitches to the grid, making it somehow vegetal, so that it grows beyond its neat, uniform squares.

Joey Watson

Pupation
2023
Glazed ceramic
Courtesy of the artist

Watson uses digitally printed molds and hand-applied glazing to make ceramic creatures such as this one, which seems to exist in a half-formed state. Pupation refers to the transition from larva to pupa, two stages in the life cycle of insects. Larvae are often wormlike and soft, without the tough exoskeletons of adult insects. The butterfly's chrysalis and the mosquito's tumbler are examples of the pupal stage. Here, the glittering glazes, numerous "feet," and distinctly biological but hard-to-classify form remind us that the natural world is full of strange creatures with brilliant colors and curious ways of developing. The mammalian traits humans think of as normal are, in fact, just one facet of the endlessly varied animal kingdom.

Watson started by digitally making a worm shape on a computer, then printing the shape in plastic. This plastic shape was then used to make the plaster mold shown here. With the plaster, he made a slip cast. (Slip is a watery mixture with nanoparticles of clay and materials that keep the clay from clumping.) The plaster sucks the nanoparticles to its surface, and they accumulate into a thin clay crust, capturing all the nooks and crannies of the mold. This crust is exceptionally fragile until fired in the kiln, but once fired, becomes durable. Watson fired the clay twice, first at a higher temperature for an undercoat, and second at a lower temperature for the metallic luster glaze. This dazzling glaze was formulated by James Haggerty, a Santa Barbara ceramist, who works with his wife, Linda Haggerty.

Pae White
(b. 1963)

Phosphenes (Color Field 1)
2011
Ink and clay on wood

Phosphenes (Partial Cataracts 11)
2013
Ink and clay on wood

Loan courtesy of 1301PE, Los Angeles, and the artist

Here, the artist has used a computer-controlled laser cutter to burn off thin layers of paper and ink. This is like the reverse of printing: removing material rather than adding. While her artwork is clearly machine-made and completely dictated by the program, there is a feeling of unpredictability in these hazy, patterned veils that recalls the controlled chaos of a sputtering inkjet printer running out of ink.