

Patterns of paint and program

Painting is grounded in the traditional. Being a largely dominant form in Western/European art history, it's inescapably attached to the past. However as artists continue to paint today, it also has the capacity to examine the present and imagine the future.

Tony Curran uses informed digital attitudes to explore contemporary viewer engagements with paintings. Utilising traditional and digital tools, he is interested in examining technological mediation, contemporary expressionism and how we experience authenticity.

Instances of fixed proportions considers the abstract in the context of the connected world – how digital attitudes can re-present abstract representation to communicate relatable ideas and narratives. Taking form as three paintings and a video work, the digital and the painterly are mutually concerned with the use of the surface and their influence on each other.

Sourcing visual material from previous portrait investigations, Curran isolates colour and shapes into fragments that are treated as gestural data. Using a program called *The unconscious is a rectangle*, the algorithms generate possible painterly compositions, making connections and patterns as a form of data-visualisation. By outsourcing the artist's imagination to a program, Curran challenges the viewer to consider where the painter's authenticity lies.

As a method to actualise these images as finalised artworks, Curran then translates selected compositions into paintings. Entertaining the idea of the viewer holding a unique interpretive engagement with the canvas, he uses colour and texture to re-present the digital as a personal experience. The paintings consider the abstract in their reference to styles of expressionism, but also through the processes and concepts in the forming of these works.

In the program's computational processes, the gestural fragments are catalogued as data to be reconfigured into new visual information. In order for humans to communicate with the system, images are used in the input and output of information. In much the same way our minds have abstracted modes of thinking that are translated into speech when communicating, *The unconscious is a rectangle* occurs in an alternate space of algorithms and code and expresses itself through the surface of the screen.

Functioning as a work itself in the gallery, the program provides reference for the processes involved, but also acts as its own disassociated temporal composition, constantly in flux. Its form is also physical through its inherent machinery, but instead of pigment, communicates with the viewer through the light of the screen. These varied forms of exhibition invite the audience to consider the surface as a point of communication and as a potential site for ideas and forms to mediate.

When painting is traditionally informed by reality, Curran considers how reality is affected by the digital. The surface of the screen informs our decisions and ideas on a daily basis, projecting and creating structures of representation that fragment the way we view ourselves and reality. *Instances of fixed proportions* presents the coming together of surfaces of paint and technology in the form of abstraction. Where the digital abstracts the nature of our existence, these works communicate our adapted attitudes in an artistic context. In today's culture, the digital is not just a tool, but a method of thinking and imagining.

References: The Post Digital Constellation, David M. Berry, 2015.

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