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Alex Estorick, "Art's new hybrid economy: who is making creative waves in a sector where analogue and digital media exist together?" *The Art Newspaper*, July 4, 2025.



THE ART NEWSPAPER

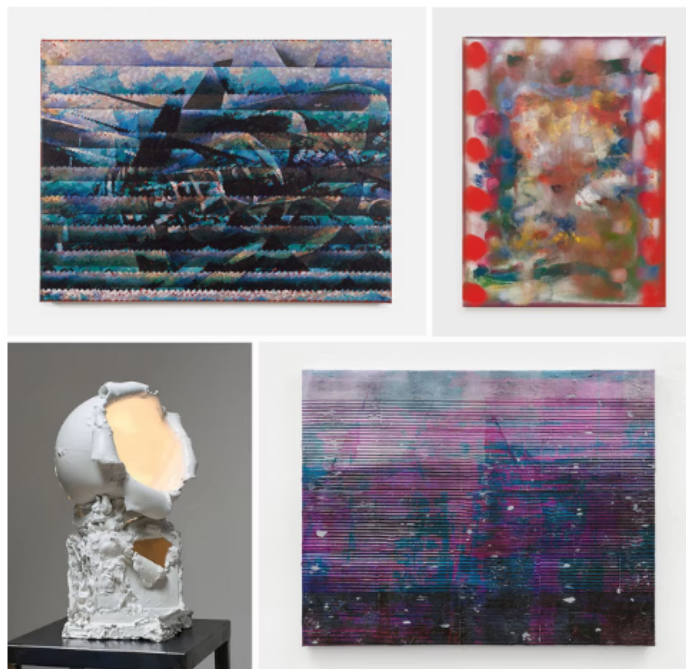
Technology // Analysis

Art's new hybrid economy: who is making creative waves in a sector where analogue and digital media exist together?

Practitioners such as Simon Denny, Chris Dorland, Sara Ludy and Jenna Basso Pietrobon are doing thought-provoking, transmedia work while being offline and online simultaneously

Alex Estorick

4 July 2025



Art that embraces a hybrid reality. Clockwise from top left: Simon Denny, *Output 1076* (2025), plotted gouache and inkjet on canvas; Sara Ludy, *On Days* (2024), acrylic on canvas; Chris Dorland, *Untitled (erosion model)*, 2025; a Jenna Basso Pietrobon lamp sculpture from the project *Break the Mold* (2024-25)

Denny: courtesy of the artist, Petzel Gallery, and Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler. Photos: Nick Nash. Ludy: courtesy of the artist and Smart Objects. Dorland: Courtesy the artist and Nicoletti Contemporary. Photo by Lewis Ronald. Jenna Basso Pietrobon: Courtesy the artist; photograph, Giulio Favotto

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At a moment when all online images are flowing into one machine-learning algorithm or another, it is easy to foresee the convergence of old canons of painting, photography, and film into an undifferentiated field of digital “slop”. Notwithstanding the implications for the precarious life of the cultural producer, this state of artificial intelligence (AI) affairs also augurs a world in which humans lack oversight over the production of images, which increasingly emerge from the latent space of accumulated data in AI models.

A number of artists have sought to halt the onset of consequent cultural blindness by calling attention to the ways technical systems shape social realities. The new machine-assisted paintings by Simon Denny, who was recently appointed a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit, address the “illegibility” of image generation in the age of AI, when history is all “jumbled up”. The artist’s two new series, presented with the gallery Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler at the JW Marriott Hotel Berlin, overlooking a hub for the German Ministry of Defence, play on the militarised rhetoric of Italian Futurism as well as cubism’s attempt to capture multiple perspectives simultaneously.

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"There is no such thing as offline and online, we're always both." The artist Simon Denny working in his studio with a plotter painting machine, 2025

Courtesy of the artist, Petzel Gallery, and Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler.
Photograph: Nick Ash

For Denny, "there is no such thing as offline and online, we're always both," which heightens the relevance of the historical avant-garde to a world of multi-channel experience as well as to a moment of rearmament in Europe. By using mechanical plotters to execute his paintings, Denny not only highlights generative AI as a machine for manufacturing history, he also aligns the canon of painting with that of computational art. In the process, he embraces the hybrid reality of an art world where both analogue

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and digital media live together, one that is crying out for work that embraces plurality without being nebulous.

Denny is not alone in treating painting as one strand of a wider transmedia strategy. The California-born artist Sara Ludy has built a career engineering porousness between media: from sculpture to video to virtual reality. Her recent exhibition of paintings at Smart Objects, Los Angeles, expressed the lingering effects of screen-based experience on life lived in the New Mexico desert. In a recent interview, she acknowledged painting through a “postdigital” lens: “The way I perceive light, space, and surface is shaped by years spent working in that [screen-centred] realm. Even if I’m not actively engaging with digital tools, that lens is embedded in how I see and make.”



Installation view, Chris Dorland, *Clone Repo (server ruin)* (2025), Nicoletti Contemporary, London. The show relocated glitch aesthetics from the monolith screen to a new series of paintings
Photo by Lewis Ronald. Courtesy the artist and Nicoletti Contemporary.

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Of course, that lens is also financialised, politicised, and militarised, which has prompted the German media artist and filmmaker Hito Steyerl to ask, with the release of her new book Medium Hot: Images in the Age of Heat(2025): “In an age where most images have become operational, [...] what can an inoperative image be?” With machine learning now being used to enhance the precision and autonomy of drone operations, artists are helping to maintain public focus on the opaque domain of nonhuman vision. For the Montreal-born New York-based artist Chris Dorland, “Art can’t necessarily stop the machinery, but it can expose its limits [...] Technical error becomes a rupture in the smooth interface — a break in the fantasy.” The title of his recent exhibition at Nicoletti Contemporary, Clone Repo (server ruin), refers to the practice of downloading files stored online to a local hard drive. Bathed in the glow of its central LED monolith displaying degraded screen grabs from TikTok and Instagram against a “dead server sound bath” by Leon Louder, the show appeals to the urge to evade systems of surveillance. It also relocates glitch aesthetics from the screen to a new series of paintings, subverting one form of seduction after another while validating multimedia practice.

Even a painter’s painter such as the Canadian-American Tim Kent has absorbed digital modes of visualisation, building compositions out of vector graphics that stress the Cartesian roots of military viewfinders. Kent was part of Fever Dream, a group show in May at Studio

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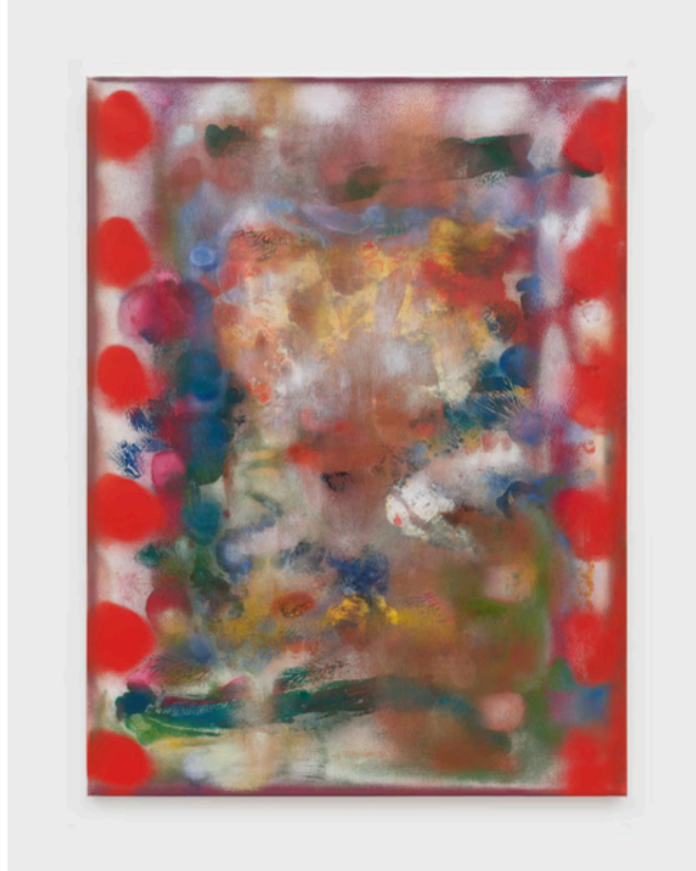
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Underground, New York, curated by Julianna Vezzetti and Xandra Beverlin, whose works register as postdigital aftershocks. A case in point is the California-born Petra Cortright, whose contributions to the show included a painting on anodized aluminium titled Athos address Internet communication_bank foreclosures banjo-kazooie stratagy(2021) that turns a greyscale grid into an emergent field of indeterminate flora and fauna.

If such works exemplify painting from a digital place, the London-based Diana Taylor's forthcoming show of paintings at Don't Look Projects, Los Angeles, comes from the opposite direction. Layering the graphical matrix of Gustave Doré's engravings together with a surfeit of other patterns over a pixellated bitmap, the artist makes legible the collapse of analogue and digital organising principles that AI obscures.

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Sara Ludy, *On Days* (2024), acrylic on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and Smart Objects

If canonical histories of linear progress are no longer wholly credible, it is still possible to identify fertile zones at the borders of art, technology, and design. The decision of Jenna Basso Pietrobon to step away from the New York art scene has fuelled a practice that evades categorisation. Having returned to the town of Nove, in the Veneto, northeast Italy, where her grandparents produced ceramic lamps, she has developed a practice that unsettles the slip-casting process by removing clay from its mould prematurely and stacking the unhardened geometrical forms. Cohering through chance and manual craft, the illuminated outcomes sit uneasily between sculpture and design.

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Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby anticipated this world of hybrid objects by uncoupling product design from function and reframing it as a forum in which to speculate on possible futures. Following the corporate conversion of speculative design into a vehicle for fetishising the future, the duo’s new book *Not Here, Not Now: Speculative Thought, Impossibility, and the Design Imagination* (2025) asks “[w]hat it means to design at a time when, for many people, the future seems to have become an impossibility.”



Jenna Basso Pietrobon, ceramic lamp sculptures from the series *Breaking the Mold* (2024-25)
Courtesy of the artist

The answer, it seems, is a form of reworlding that uses all forms of media to envision sustainable alternatives. One of Dunne and Raby’s former students, Deborah Tchoudjinoﬀ, was part of a recent exhibition at Hypha Studios in London, titled *The Geological Unconscious*. Curated by Julie F Hill and Susan Eyre, the show entangled multiple media to explore worlds of more-than-human experience. Tchoudjinoﬀ’s work

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The City of Gold (2022) speculates on the Anthropocene, incorporating the physical fragments of a fictional supercontinent visualised in a nearby virtual world. While Eyre’s installation Lithos Panoptes (2025) refracts a video of human activity through a series of lenses, capturing the molecular structure of magnetite while revealing the mineral’s view of the world.

Palmer Gallery, in London, attempted something similar through its recent show Handful of Dust which considered sand as a mnemonic material and shapeshifting archive, slowing the spectator’s journey by situating them in a space of primordial experience. In this context, Li Li Ren stood out for her use of 3D-modelling software to develop a series of sculptures — from dismembered arms to desiccated topographies — that expressed the distribution of the body across physical and digital, and human and nonhuman domains.

At a moment when art’s legacy structures are giving way to a new border economy, work like Ren’s can help to ensure that AI and generative media do not create a state of unresolvable impasse but instead engineer a place where analogue and digital media live together in a rich field of hybrid creativity.

<https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2025/07/04/arts-new-hybrid-economy-who-is-making-creative-waves-in-a-sector-where-analogue-and-digital-media-exist-together>