



Time Changes Everything

Margie Hughto, Beth Bischoff, Darcy Gerbarg, Franco Andres

July 11 - August 9, 2019

Curated by Sara Felice, Managing Director, Point of Contact

With essays by Sarah Corona, Sara Felice, DJ Hellerman, Garth Johnson,

Natalie McGrath, and David S. Reuben

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Point of Contact Gallery

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FOREWORD

It has always been Point of Contact's mission to facilitate a convergence of diverse voices in the arts. Since its inception as a celebrated academic journal in 1975, Point of Contact has featured the work of artists, writers and scholars from around the world. Following the vision of our late founder Pedro Cuperman, Point of Contact evolved from journal to art collection, from art collection to gallery, and finally to its present form, a 1600 sq. ft. multi-arts organization, in the heart of downtown Syracuse.

I first met Professor Margie Hughto at the Point of Contact Gallery in the summer of 2018. We struck up a conversation about life and work at Syracuse University. Our multi-generational dialogue touched the heart of Point of Contact's values, connecting emerging and established talents. With a career spanning over four decades, Professor Hughto is a revered Syracuse University, College of Visual and Performing Arts faculty member. She enjoys an international reputation in contemporary ceramics.

We would like to thank Professor Hughto for proposing this exhibition and introducing us to the visiting artists, Darcy Gerbarg and Beth Bischoff. The knowledge, expertise and openness of these three artists has enabled this collaboration that includes the Syracuse University graduate MFA student, Franco Andres. This exhibition exemplifies the Point of Contact's mission, which is to form inspired art communities, locally and globally.

From their artistic practices Hughto, Bischoff, Gerbarg and Andres bring us *Time Changes Everything*, a commentary on their personal visual journeys, that explore elements of spirituality, technology, archeology and gender. Point of Contact celebrates the creative ferment and diversity of the artistic voices that these artists bring to this exhibition.

Time Changes Everything has benefitted from the contributions of many individuals. We would particularly like to thank Dean Karin Ruhlandt, Syracuse University, College of Arts and Sciences, whose commitment to excellence in our university's creative spaces creates opportunities for students, faculty and staff to enhance their journeys in education at Point of Contact, year after year.

Thank you to Jeffrey Hoone, Executive Director of the Coalition of Museum and Art Cultural Centers, Syracuse University. Both Beth Bischoff and Darcy Gerbarg produced their artworks at Light Work.

The four artists extend a thank you to Dean Michael Tick, College of Visual and Performing Arts and Joanna Spitzner, Director, School of Art, for their support of creative research opportunities for faculty, graduate students and the visiting artists program.

Thank you to Professor Ken Perlin, The Future Reality Lab, NYU, Courant for providing access to the VR technology that Darcy Gerbarg uses to create her artwork.

We thank the staff at Point of Contact, including; Teresita Paniagua, Executive Director of the Office of Cultural Engagement, who continues to foster the artistic vision of Pedro Cuperman; Rainer Wehner, Preparator; and Weisi Liu, Budget and Finance Administrator.

A special thank you is also extended to Natalie McGrath, who worked closely with the artists involved in this exhibition and has played a particularly important role in Point of Contact's exhibitions, public programming and collections management for the last two years.



Sara Felice, Managing Director
Punto de Contacto - Point of Contact

Time Changes Everything: Four Artists, One Moment

Natalie McGrath

Time changes everything. Despite its simplicity, this statement carries an infinite array of meanings. By turning these words over repeatedly, the possibilities reveal themselves: Birth, death, decay, creation, destruction, progression, regression, war, peace, enlightenment, revolution, extinction, growth, contamination, and healing, among others. Time is a metric by which mankind measures its successes and failures, and it in turn levies an existential gravity against us. For centuries, artists have grappled with the concept of time, the uncertainty of the future, and our place within it all. We often find ourselves attempting to buy time, bargaining for more of it through means that are all too human, rather than accepting its natural course and choosing to learn from it. As time passes, the physical proof of our lives accumulates and is ultimately consumed by nature; we innovate and evolve beyond the wildest dreams of previous generations. Such is the drive of both art and science.

For this exhibition, Margie Hughto, Darcy Gerbarg, Beth Bischoff, and Franco Andres have each exercised their own unique visual language to explore the concept of time and their place in the current moment. According to Gerbarg, this grouping of their work represents the expanse of human endeavor.¹ Each of the artists' practices embodies a distinct moment in the history of art, whether that moment is the appearance of decoration on utilitarian objects, the advent of photography, the emergence of the computer as an artistic tool, and the development of multimedia installations as a means of involving the viewer in artistic dialogue. Hughto's clay compositions, Bischoff's photographs, Gerbarg's digital paintings, and Andres' conceptual installations gather meaning from the past and future, all while staking an artistic claim in the present.

Margie Hughto: Our World in Clay

Margie Hughto's Excavation Series (2016-Present) draws inspiration from archaeological dig sites and landfills, both bodies of evidence that mark human activity and the passing of time. Hughto molds forms of discarded technology and household items, arranging them into sculptural collages which are often intermingled with other found objects. The use of these wares draws her work into the orbit of readymade art, a style developed in the early twentieth century closely associated with Marcel Duchamp and the Dadaist movement. The readymade challenges the very definition of art by presenting manufactured, everyday items as art objects. By removing the items' function and placing them on display, they take on a purely aesthetic purpose. According to Duchamp, "An ordinary object [could be] elevated to the dignity of a work of art by the mere choice of an artist."²

Regardless of how the found object is displayed or "elevated," however, it often maintains a sense of banality which ultimately directs the viewer's reception of the work. In the case of Hughto's compositions, the sculpted pieces of technology are instantly recognizable, and therefore accessible, despite how their forms have been contorted and manipulated in clay. The fact that Hughto sources her subject matter from refuse piles suggests that these objects carry a history and "memory" of their own. At one time, these items furnished the backdrop of someone's life until they were deemed obsolete and relegated to stagnate out of sight in landfills. This realization begs the question: Why are some items cherished as tokens of experience, while others are considered expendable? Where and why do human beings draw the line between trash and treasure? Hughto's compositions manage to merge these dichotomies by presenting our inventions as archaeological finds, effectively plucking them out of time for observation in a hypothetical study.

While the Excavation Series is not solely inspired by the tenets of readymade art and Dadaism, the artist cites Duchamp and Kurt Schwitters as clear influences, and also the abstract expressionists Helen Frankenthaler and Larry Poons³ Hughto's clay compositions strike a congruous balance between form and texture, featuring unique expressions of color determined by her choices of glazing and firing techniques. There is a distinct resemblance between Hughto's clay collages and the massive works of color field painting produced in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s. Like Frankenthaler's canvases, color takes on a fluid quality in each collage which moves the viewer's eye throughout the composition. The artist recalls her early interest in painting, but ultimately found the medium to be too limiting in comparison to ceramics.⁴ For Hughto, clay is a more dynamic and unpredictable form of expression. This unpredictability lends itself well to Hughto's compositions of discarded artifacts, and it is also the purpose for some of her techniques.

¹ Interview with Darcy Gerbarg, by Natalie McGrath, (April 16, 2019), Syracuse NY.

² Marcel Duchamp quoted in "Dada: Marcel Duchamp and the Readymade," MOMALearning.

³ Interview with Margie Hughto, by Natalie McGrath, (April 16, 2019), Syracuse NY.

⁴ Interview with Margie Hughto, by Natalie McGrath, (April 17, 2019), Syracuse NY.

Hughto uses a raku firing process for the Excavation Series works, a low-fire method which requires the ware to undergo "...immersion in an organic, combustible material to affect the final outcome on the glaze and raw clay."⁵ This technique produces dazzling metallics and unique color profiles in each piece. In some ways, tension exists between the beauty of these colors and the series' subject of waste and remains. Hughto's process turns obsolescence and detritus into a provocative spectacle. In many ways, these furrowed objects and their earthy, distressed tones indicate a deep discomfort with mankind's wasteful footprint and the idea of our eventual extinction. The scope of our global landfill problem complicates attempts to reverse it, but Hughto has expressed hopes that she may one day be part of that solution, whatever it may be.⁶

While signaling the uncomfortable truth that we will all cease to exist in due time, Hughto grants a new purpose to objects that were once revolutionary but are now mere fossils from our era of consumerism. In a sense, these representations of obsolete keyboards, computer mice, wristwatches, and wires are a memento mori for our technological age. Like traditional depictions of wilting flowers, overripened fruit, hourglasses, and skulls, they remind us of our own impermanence through the passing of time, and to be mindful of all that we leave behind.

Beth Bischoff's Life Cycles

The aesthetic roots of Beth Bischoff's photography run deep. Her dreamlike images of the Yucatan and Barbados evoke a soft and almost painterly impression, much like the pictorialist style of photography that was popularized at the turn of the twentieth century. Bischoff herself has noted the movement as a direct influence for this body of work, establishing a profound balance between the past and present in her images. During their pivotal moment in art history, the pictorialists chose to experiment with chemical and lighting techniques in order to produce photographs that more closely resembled paintings in their assertions of tone and feeling. This was their means of exploring photography as an artistic medium rather than a purely documentary tool, in addition to embedding their own presence and hand in the artistic process of developing images.

While the capabilities of technology have progressed considerably since then, as digital cameras and printers have largely eclipsed the use of traditional film and darkroom development methods, Bischoff's photographs retain the spirit of another time and another way of seeing. Like Ansel Adams' haunting images of the coastal Redwoods (despite his eventual turn away from pictorialism), Bischoff's Ruins series situates the viewer within scenes of serene isolation. Despite the tangled vines and dense foliage displayed before us, we are never lost in these images. The meditative energy that emanates from the photographs stems from the artist's own practices of Reiki healing, a technique of energy balancing and deep concentration. For this reason, the stillness of these images is accompanied by a unique vibration of sorts. One cannot help but gaze in, focus, take a deep breath, and feel grounded in these images.

The concept of ruin explored in this series is closely entangled with the passing of time, as Bischoff has captured the architectural remnants of lapsed civilizations amongst the lush landscapes. Like Margie Hughto's archeological constructions, the presence of these overgrown spaces reminds us that our time on this Earth is finite. However, unlike our piles of machinery that can never break down organically, the ruins of the Yucatan are gracefully and calmly reclaimed by nature. Whether intentional or not, Bischoff reminds us that life extends far beyond our bodies and our struggles; existence on this Earth is ordered by a delicate dance of nature and time.

The Syracuse Pictures: Darcy Gerbarg's Digital Reality

Darcy Gerbarg's artistic process involves the materialization of another world into our own. Since the 1970s, Gerbarg has utilized cutting edge digital tools to produce vibrant abstractions of color which are pushed and pulled within their space, later to be printed and displayed on canvas in a similar fashion to traditional paintings. In more recent years, Gerbarg has turned her attention to the dynamism and creative potential which has been unlocked by virtual reality.

In her most recent body of work, The Syracuse Pictures (2018-2019), Gerbarg enters a digital picture plane through the use of a virtual headset. With this technology, the artist has access to a full spectrum of color to produce her compositions, allowing for a seemingly infinite array of visual possibilities. Gerbarg's selections of color evoke mood and feeling, not unlike the works of the groundbreaking abstract painter Wassily Kandinsky (Russian, 1866-1944) who believed that art could produce beauty and spirituality in a similar fashion to music. Just as Kandinsky experimented with abstraction during a time when there was little frame of reference for his philosophy, Gerbarg has championed the use of computers and technology to create art that is both corollary and foreign to traditional means of artistic production; the work is familiar in its style and yet visionary in its execution.

⁵ Anderson Tuner, *Raku, Pit & Barrel: Firing Techniques*, (Westerville, Ohio: American Ceramic Society, 2007): 15.

⁶ Interview with Margie Hughto, by Natalie McGrath, (April 16, 2019), Syracuse NY.

After producing her color compositions in virtual reality, Gerbarg then uses a separate computer application to superimpose her digital paintings onto any three-dimensional space that she desires, and then captures that image. The artist is able to do this anywhere, because the application can function on her mobile devices. During a meeting at Point of Contact, Gerbarg demonstrated this technology within the gallery space. After selecting a painting from her files to demonstrate for us, Gerbarg held her phone out in front of her. The application then oriented itself within the room by scanning the floor, and then suddenly filled its display with vibrant color. Gerbarg's composition did not simply overlay the image of the gallery space; rather, forms and colors appeared before us in three-dimensions. The textures of Gerbarg's brushstrokes filled the space with her presence, just as the hand of the artist is often evident and a signature feature of traditional methods of painting. She then demonstrated a simple screen capture to freeze the picture plane, which could later be printed onto large-scale canvases at the Light Work photography lab in Syracuse, NY, where the artist has printed many of The Syracuse Pictures.

Gerbarg's eagerness and enthusiasm to demonstrate her process is sheer proof of her dedication to the medium. She has spent decades experimenting with and experiencing these new capabilities for computer art, and has worked to increase the acceptance and celebration of these methods in formal artistic circles. Gerbarg's process is equally thrilling and mysterious, as she synthesizes her involvement in both our physical world and a new digital frontier.

Franco Andres: Evolution and Visual Revolution

As the youngest member of this ensemble of makers, multimedia artist Franco Andres projects his creative voice through enigmatic installations which call into question our personal identities and the quotidian rituals of daily life. These observations extend into personal reflection, as Andres incorporates self-portraiture and references to his formative experiences into the work. His most recent corpus, *Handbuilding*, incorporates ceramics, video footage, and deconstructed artistic materials to explore where the artist ends and where the work begins. Does that boundary truly exist? Has it simply shifted with the passing of time? Such questions recall the philosophy of the international Fluxus art movement which first developed in the 1960s and 1970s. The guiding principles of Fluxus (translated as "flowing" in Latin) centered around the artistic process as a performance, and the process itself being prioritized over the finished "product" of a work of art.

Vagueness and familiarity are competing forces in Andres' installations, very much in keeping with the spirit of this exhibition. In his photographic series, *Wipe with a Damp Clean Cloth* (2019), the artist utilizes anatomical dolls and textile puppets to depict figures who are laid truly bare; they are presented with no eyes, no mouths, no skin, and no genitals which may be used to classify them. They represent no one, and yet, through their presence in staged scenes of the everyday, they represent all of us. According to the artist, human beings are thinking more creatively about their own identities than ever before. Andres has reached the conclusion that we, as a society, are actively accelerating evolution, a process so naturally slow that it is considered imperceptible by single generations, through the revision of social roles such as gender and sexuality.⁷ For Andres, this phenomenon is evident in how we communicate and present ourselves in an increasingly connected age where information and inspiration are literally always at hand. The human experience has been altered drastically by our technological, social, and creative advancements. The figures presented in Andres' images and installations are blank slates, engaging in monotony, but they are charged with a latent energy that will lead to evolution and revolution.

Conclusion: In and Out of Time

For artists such as Margie Hughto, Beth Bischoff, Darcy Gerbarg, and Franco Andres, time functions as another tool in their creative arsenals. Whether they are repurposing the evidence of our past, ushering in the technology of our future, or reflecting on our current behaviors, these artists remain acutely aware of how change and progression are presented in their work. As their creations are displayed in harmony with one another through this exhibition, we are presented with a definitive truth: art can freeze a single moment or preserve certain memories from decay and ruin, but Time Changes Everything.

Natalie McGrath
Art Historian
June 2019, Buffalo, New York

⁷ Interview with Franco Andres, by Natalie McGrath, (May 21, 2019), via video-conference.



Darcy Gerbarg: Painting in Virtual Space

David S. Reuben

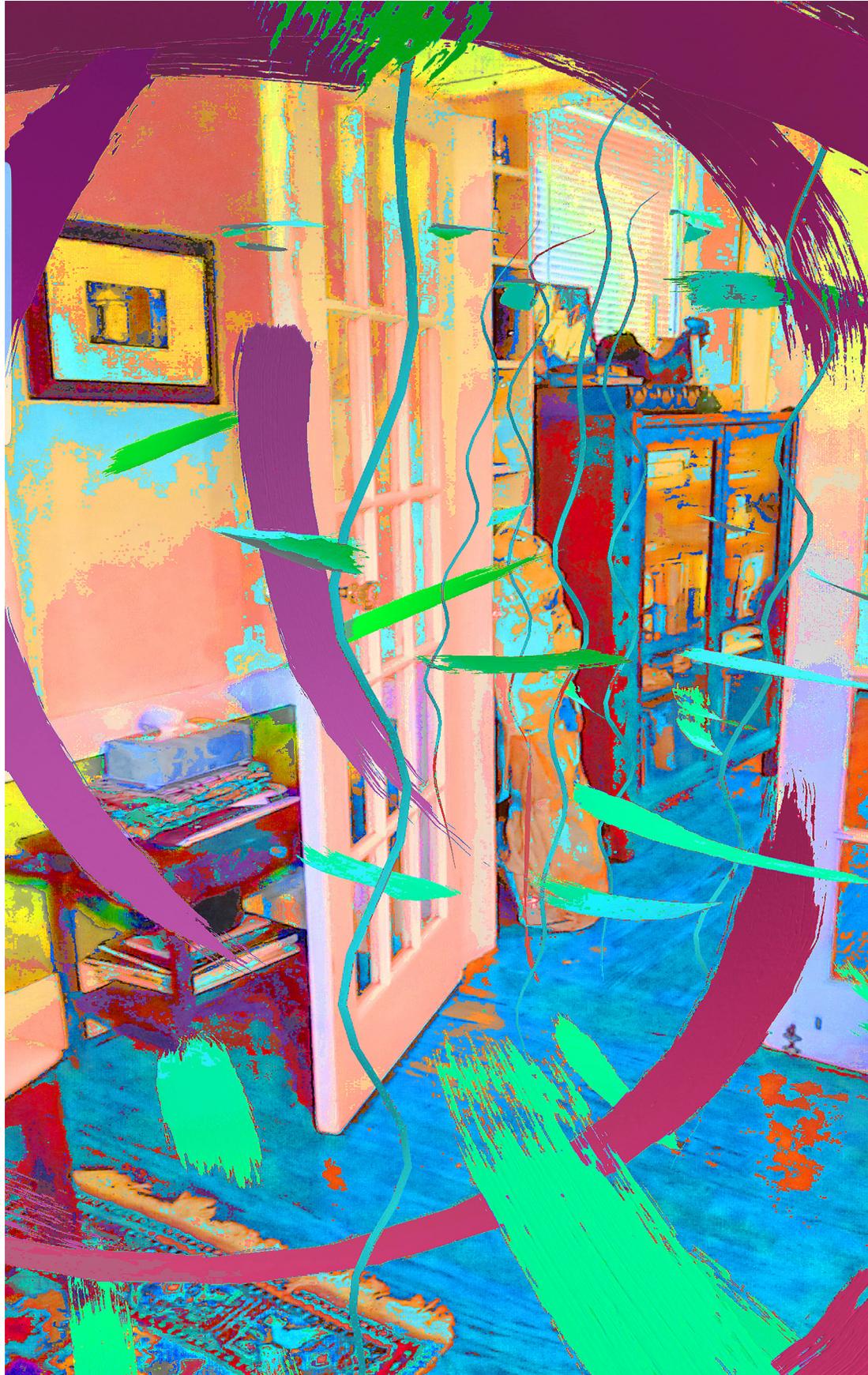
For Darcy Gerbarg, one of today's popular technological items—the virtual reality headset (also known as 3DVR goggles)—has become a creative tool for exploring the frontiers of digital art, a practice that she began in the late 1970s when the genre was still in its infancy. In contrast to consumers who use the headset for entertainment, Gerbarg employs it as an instrument for making three-dimensional compositions in virtual space. To begin, she places the goggles over her eyes while grasping the two controllers in her hands. Initially what she sees is simply a black void, a dark simulated room within which she can move about while manipulating the controllers to paint three-dimensional abstract expressionist brush gestures with colored light. Working intuitively for a few hours at a time, Gerbarg selects brush sizes, colors, and textures while moving her body and arms about to construct what she calls “3D light sculptures” that fill the virtual environment. Throughout the process, she uses the software's internal camera to take snapshots from multiple angles and perspectives, cropping out compositions to be developed into final pictures. She can shoot various parts of a light sculpture by scanning up and down or moving through the interior, or from outside the structure while keeping within the virtual environment. These snapshots, as well as a recording of everything created during a session, are saved as digital files that are then transferred to a computer and manipulated further using Photoshop to create final compositions that, lastly, are printed on canvas using archival inks.

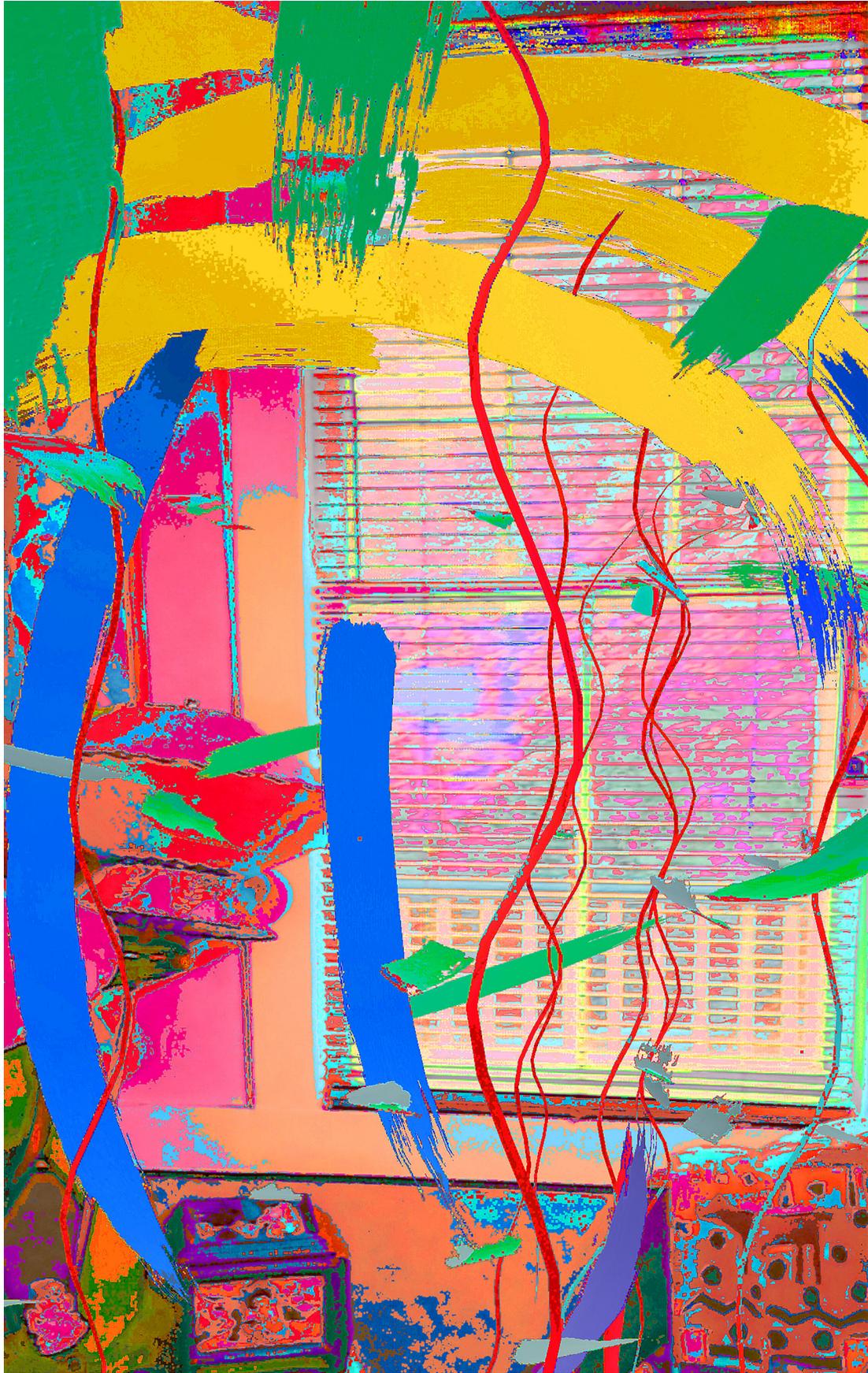
Gerbarg considers herself a “third generation abstract expressionist” and a formalist, whose primary interest has always been in compositional interactions that give a painting its punch (such as the properties of “push/pull” and “expansion/contraction” that were popularized through the teachings of Hans Hofmann). Nevertheless, Gerbarg is not disinterested in incorporating references to the real world into the paintings. Like abstract expressionist paintings of the 1950s and 60s, Gerbarg's *Syracuse Pictures* are dominated by abstract properties such as broad sweeping brush gestures and bold colors, but the pictorial spaces are not as flat as in typical first-generation abstract expressionism. The compositions are in fact highly illusionistic, due in part to the shadows cast from the painted gestures, but mainly because the virtual structures are themselves three-dimensional. Such illusionism is therefore perfectly reflective of the virtual world within which the imagery is developed and, in some examples Gerbarg has even included faint references to a horizon with a hint of mountains.

Whereas the real world is a physically non-existent but sometimes subtly depicted virtually in *The Syracuse Pictures*, it holds an equal position with formalist abstraction in Gerbarg's *Inside and Outside Pictures*. For this series, Gerbarg uses custom software to import her 3D light sculptures to her phone. While enabling her to interact with but not alter the structures as much as she does while working in the virtual environment, the software offers the added ability to photograph what is seen through the phone's lens. Using this procedure, Gerbarg inserts the light sculpture as a pictorial element in a photograph taken with her phone. Specifically, she merges the ephemeral information created in virtual space with real views of architecture and objects inside and outside a building, ranging from her home and studio to any public edifice. As in making *The Syracuse Pictures*, snapshots are Photoshopped and printed on canvas, resulting in representations of “Mixed Reality (MR),” a common term for hybrids of the virtual and the real. As such, the *Inside and Outside Pictures* challenge viewers to determine what is real and what is imaginary, a puzzlement that is confounded by the presence of photographed imagery seen through doors and windows, reflected in mirrors, or appearing on a television screen.

In interviews and writings, Gerbarg often cites Jackson Pollock as a favorite artist, and such an acknowledgment makes perfect sense. Employing a process that is analogous to Pollock's intuitive manipulation of his arms and body to create dynamic compositions made of flung and dripped paint, Gerbarg performs a similar ritual using the tools and media of the 21st-century.

David S. Reuben
Curator
2019, Los Angeles, California







Between Two Worlds

Sarah Corona

What sort of enterprise or endeavor is it for the person who experiments with and creates “computer art”? What does it take to create between two worlds, the digital and the physical? With the computer as tool, new and intriguing combinations, sequences, probabilities, relationships, geometries, and logic fire the imagination. The creative process is very much the same as with “traditional” artists. He/she conceives a process and/or an ultimate product, then proceeds to construct the process, which in turn constructs the work.

When we talk about digital art today, most of us think about video installations or luminous screenings. And it is almost too simple to reduce a vast use of technology for creative purposes to the term “digital art.” The origins of this genre lie in the so-called Computer Art, born in some research labs in the late 1960s as a by-product of the creation of math and physics software. Artists and scientists, like Stan VanDerBeek and Ken Knowlton, frequently collaborated and started to experiment with these new tools to create images on the computer, which were then exported and shown as works of art.

Back then, confusion and dissatisfaction with computer art were common among general audiences. People were disappointed seeing these works in public exhibitions, but the stakeholders talked about computer art as something “radically different,” “revolutionary,” a “novel medium,” with “potential” and “unique requirements” that led to the “transformation of space and time.”¹ Time has proven that the exploration of new mediums to create art has always been a fundamental aspect throughout art history and to this day. Time has proven also that the stakeholders of the late 1970s were right: those artists, courageous enough to create artworks that were not immediately accepted by the masses, gave birth to a whole new branch of art, nowadays called digital art. Digital artists explore VR and digital tools to create immersive environments, physical experiences, and two- and three-dimensional objects.

Beginning in the 1960s into the early 1970s, a few artists experimented with computers to represent geometric forms, creating figurative or abstract images using only letters, numbers, or other special characters. Ruth Leavitt, for example, moved from traditional expressionist painting to creating images on the computer by solely using plus and minus signs. Another well-known artist, Ken Knowlton, became known for a collaborative work of art called *Studies in Perception I*, realized in collaboration with Leon Harmon. Their image of a reclining nude (the dancer Deborah Hay) was made by scanning a photograph with a camera and converting the analog voltages into binary numbers that were assigned typographic symbols based on halftone densities.

Experiment, too, did Darcy Gerbarg as one of the first artists to make art using paint systems that were only available in a couple of research labs. One of a small number of women in the field, Gerbarg was very close to those scientists who were developing new software and tools at the time. Occasionally she would ask for additional features or point out problems with the software. Better computer graphics technologies were born, which she then used for her personal research and for creating images/artworks on the computer. In 1979 Gerbarg first used Alvy Ray Smith's² user-friendly full-color paint system at NYIT, which benefited from a couple of Tom Duff's³ additions, to create her first computer images.

Until that time, Gerbarg was primarily using acrylic pigmented paint mediums to make paintings. Fascinated by the possibility of overcoming the limitations of physical media, coupled with the belief that the leading artists of each generation were using, or at least aware of, the latest technology in their fields, she set out to discover the latest technology for the visual arts. Being familiar with electronic music, she was interested in finding a counterpart for visual composition. Compared to the majority of artists working with digital technology at the time, she was not interested in moving images and did not consider film or video, also a nascent technological development.

From the second she first encountered a paint system, Gerbarg knew that she had found the medium that would best serve her sensibilities. It was direct, controllable, and seemingly infinite in its capabilities. Unfortunately, it offered very limited options for exporting

¹ Superanimism, *The word made flesh*, p. 96

² Alvy Ray Smith: Cofounded two successful startups: Pixar—see Pixar founding documents (sold to Disney)—and Altamira (sold to Microsoft). First director of computer graphics at Lucasfilm. At Xerox PARC for the birth of the personal computer, the internet, and the first color pixels. alvyray.com/Bio/BioShort.htm

³ Thomas Douglas Selkirk Duff (born December 8, 1952) is a computer programmer. He developed a new approach to compositing images; later worked for 12 years at Bell Labs Computing Science Research Center, where he worked on computer graphics, wireless networking, and Plan 9.^[3] In the course of his work there, he authored the well known “rc” shell for the Version 10 Unix operating system. Duff has worked at Pixar Animation Studios since 1996.

digital images out into the physical world: the only way to get the images out of the computer was to record them on film. Color printers did not exist yet. Gerbarg's efforts to apply her digital, computer-generated images to physical media (ceramics, carpets, murals, textiles, fine art prints, and traditional paintings in particular), where "people can live with them"⁴, represents a unique aspect of her artistic practice that deserves a closer look.

Some of Gerbarg's most compelling works from the 1980s came out of a series of prints made by transferring computer-generated images onto etching plates, which she then used to print viscosity etchings. Some works, at a first glance, look like watercolor drawings, landscapes made of highs and lows, blurred lines, and vast color fields. Geometric lines structure the canvases/sheets and exhibit a painterly quality on a secondary layer. It is hard to believe that the image and effects come from a computer.

Creating an etching plate using a computer-generated image was, and still is, a very interesting way of combining creative processes and producing physical artwork. Two apparently opposite techniques—the computer image: new, immaterial, and digital; and the etching: old, time-consuming, and physical—are now merged into one process and one final piece of work. Furthermore, these plates function as enduring memory devices, probably more durable than any contemporary USB stick or hard drive and carry more aesthetic appeal. They testify to early computer graphics experiments and are also a visual record of a specific historical moment: the entrance of machines into the art-making process. Indeed, Gerbarg uses them today as if no time had passed, and her new prints, made with the same plates, show the same sharp traces and fleeting nuances present in earlier versions.

In the following years, Gerbarg's works became cleaner and sharper. The work *May 1* is one such example. Floating squares of different colors stack, overlap, and intertwine in an infinite space. The lines have a pixelated appearance as they are based on an underlying grid, a characteristic of the drawing software used at the time. Transported from the screen onto Arches paper, with an incredible attention to detail, it looks like a cross-stitched fabric, almost indiscernible from cloth.

Her many years of practice have culminated in a recent and substantial body of work called *The Syracuse Pictures*, created in a 3-D virtual space. The colorful paintings differ from the aesthetics of her peers in their vivid colors and strong sense of movement. Incredible depth pulls the viewer into a landscape of abstract strokes; lines and forms convey the feeling of energy and speed. Pieces of decomposed forms and confetti-like stripes stick out sharply against blurry color fields, hanging in space as if gravity didn't exist. In some paintings, the signs form circular, vortex-like compositions that convey a stunning amount of energy, while other paintings are of a calmer nature, almost akin to landscapes, where the marks fluctuate as if they were lingering in undulating waters.

These works, contemplated from a distance, look like well-realized trompe l'oeils of environments bursting with energy, executed with the astonishing perfection of a hyper-realist painter. Nothing indicates that they have been made technologically in a fictional and digital environment. Only close observation unveils the pixelated nature of some parts of the paintings, while the rest appears so real that the human eye can only wonder.

To fully understand the initial creation process of these works, I participated in one of the painting sessions. Armed with the VR glasses and two joysticks, I immersed myself in this infinite, never-ending black space with no ground and no ceiling. Every movement was a balancing act, as the vestibule of the ear did not adapt that fast to this environment where space and time merge. With every arm movement, I left a fluctuating, luminous sign in the infinite. Every brushstroke was a mark of pure energy. It takes a while to adapt to this new way of moving, orienting, and expressing oneself, so far removed from what we are used to in the "real" world.

This direct experience only hinted at a fuller understanding of the nature of these works of art. The translation of movement into visible and colorful marks of energy is a fascinating, almost mesmerizing process. The experience of being able to leave traces by moving the entire body (not only the hand/arm like in traditional painting) is new and exciting. It takes some time to adapt to this suspended environment where the body merges with the painted marks. Furthermore, the new software permits one to observe, walk around, and stroll under—even through—the marks from all four sides. A former two-dimensional practice now becomes sculptural. A special virtual camera allows one to take pictures of what has been constructed in a painterly manner, representing another important aspect in Gerbarg's contemporary creation process: her 3D light sculptures are only a first step towards the final work of art.

⁴ Cit. In conversation with Darcy Gerbarg (New York, June 20, 2018)

Gerbarg explains in an interview:

It's been a long time since I worked directly on a large blank canvas, but I painted that way for many years. Then for many years, before I started these Syracuse Pictures, I created all my images on the computer first and then translated them onto canvas using projections, stencils, silkscreen, airbrush, acrylic gels and paint, etc. I also used various hand printing techniques to translate my computer images onto paper and canvas. Nowadays, with these new software technologies, I have a different way of working, because [in the VR space] one doesn't have to use all the foreshortening, push and pull, and other visual tricks to create a picture that looks like it has depth on a flat picture plane. Also, until I have finished artwork in some physical medium, the image exists only in the memory of the computer or on the screen. I am not interested in film or video. I want my images to hold up through time, and the challenge for me is to develop ways of creating images on computers (in VR), and then take them and fabricate finished works that can hang on walls. (cit.)

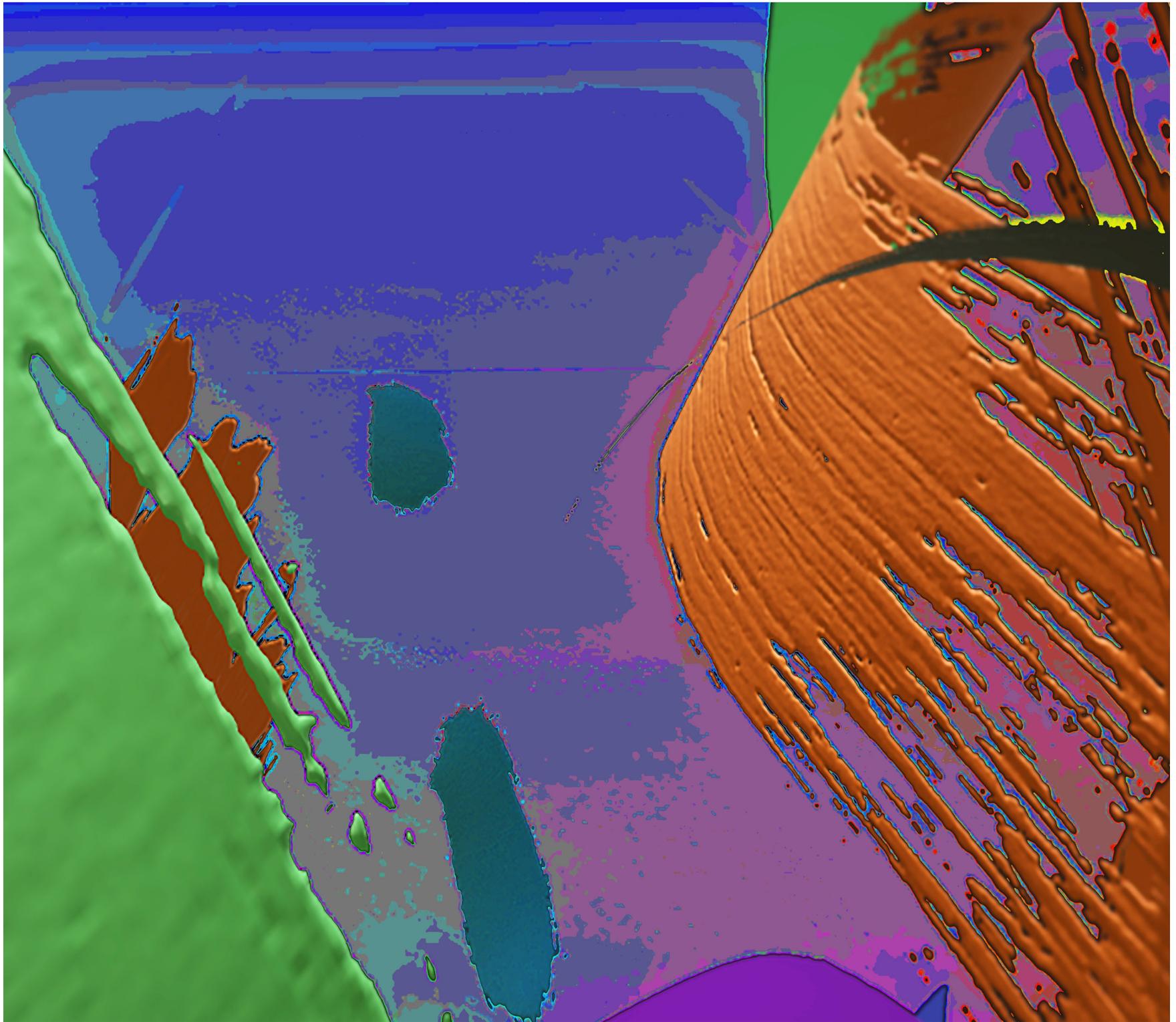
Gerbarg defines herself as a formalist artist. She isn't interested in representing figurative and realistic images, but is more interested in color itself, where it sits in space, and the effects of her actions that create intuitive "brush" strokes of light and color. Indeed, the physical experience of the VR software is closer to an ecstatic dance than a premeditated choreography (e.g. the movement over a canvas).

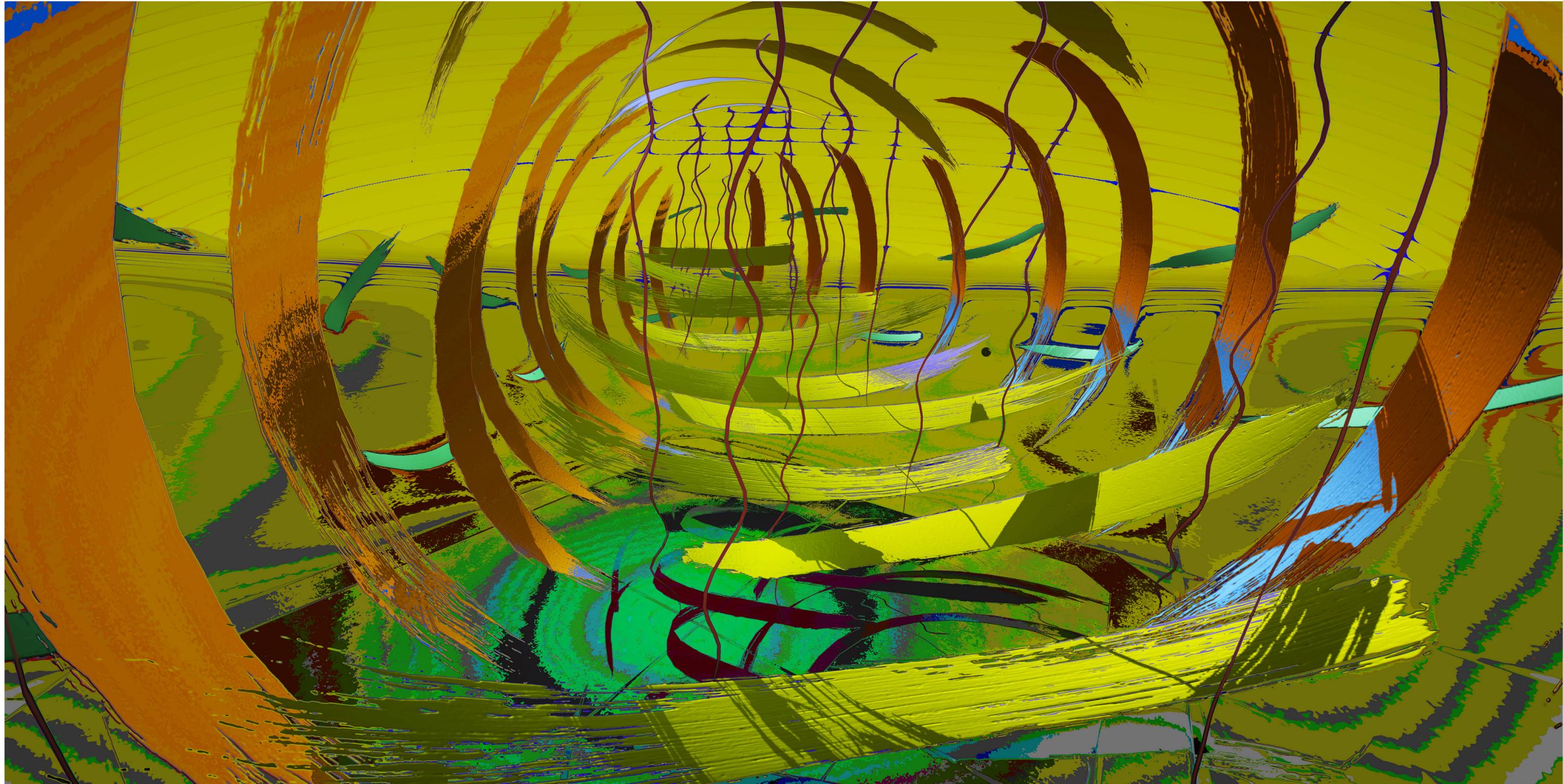
Gerbarg's paintings are based on the fundamentals of traditional painting but made with technology and transported out of it. Energy, movement, and space play a major role, and rather than perceiving the act of painting as the performance of a single limb, Gerbarg sees it as the convergence in time and space of multiple extremities. Creating in 3D virtuality might sound like a technological shortcut or painterly escamotage, but the truth is that Gerbarg approaches empty space in much the same way she approaches a large physical canvas. She chooses one color, one brush size and texture at a time and starts with large, solid gestural strokes. She then continues to paint by changing her tools like a traditional painter would do.

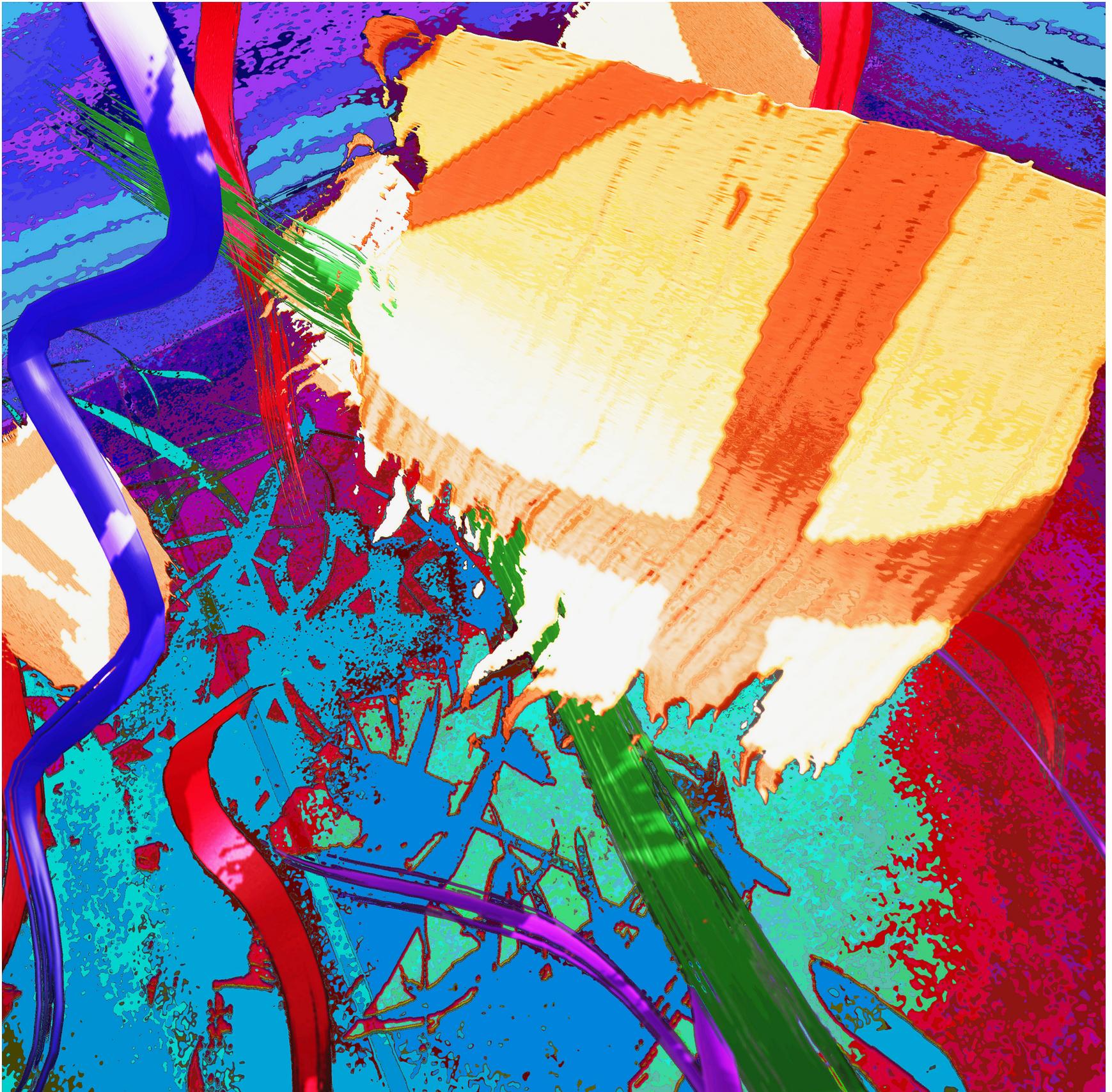
Her mind is free of any premeditated image, and her actions have deep intuitive origins. Her best performance happens when she is in "the zone," an almost meditative state of mind where Gerbarg captures images in a systematic and intuitive way, bearing in mind that she will export and work them on the computer as soon as she "leaves" this digital atelier. In an abstract manner, Gerbarg intends to make art that offers an augmentation of the viewer's experience. A landscape, maybe, but also a question of the number of existing vision fields.

The remoteness of the inspiration from the product characterizes computer art in particular. Complex thoughts, feelings, and purposes map onto human actions; these actions rigorously define mechanical procedures; and these, in turn, produce the result. Gerbarg's works, loaded with that energy, reveal both the physical effort and the strong creative drive that are needed to create between two almost opposite mediums and worlds: the computer and the canvas.

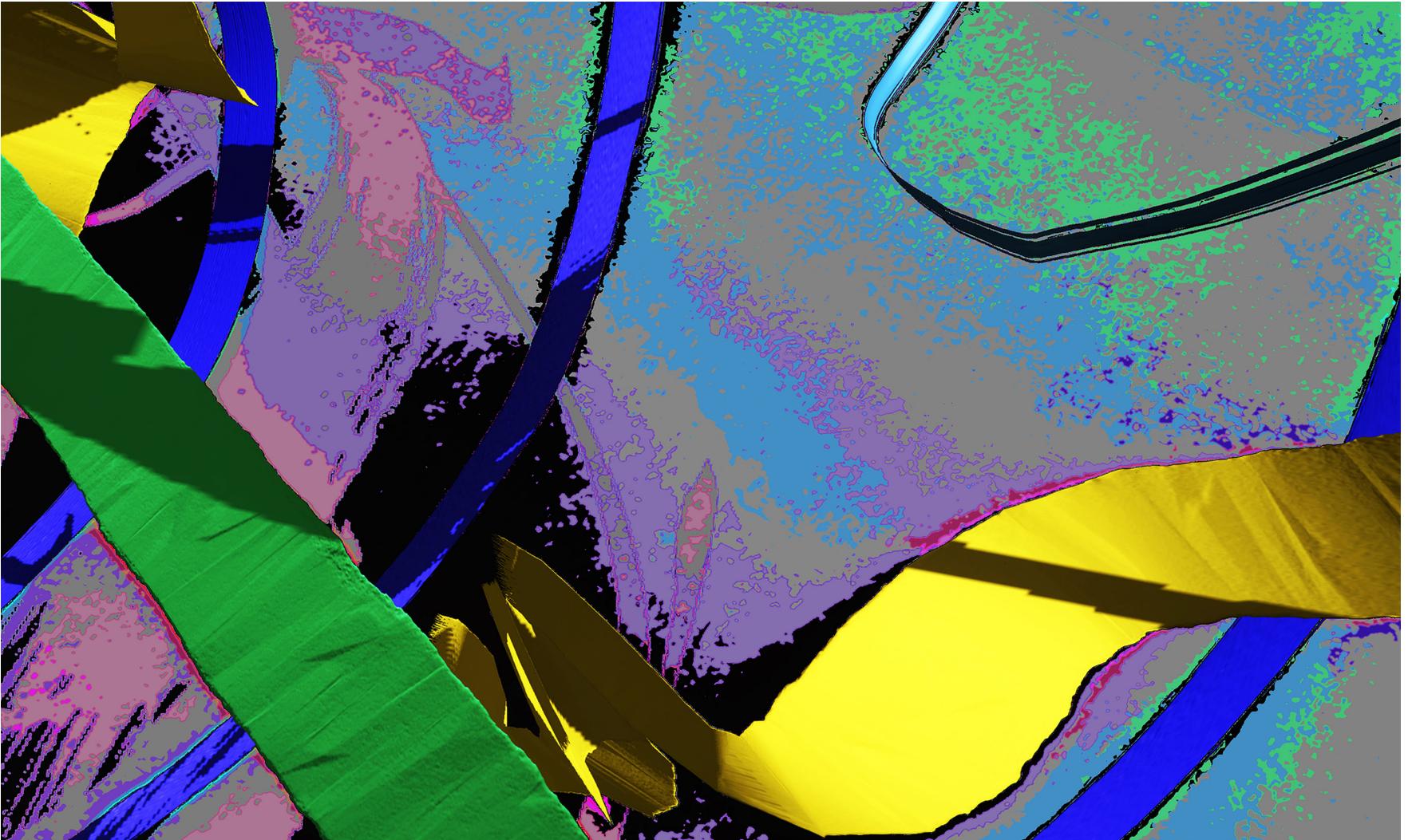
*Sarah Corona
Art Historian
September 2018, New York*

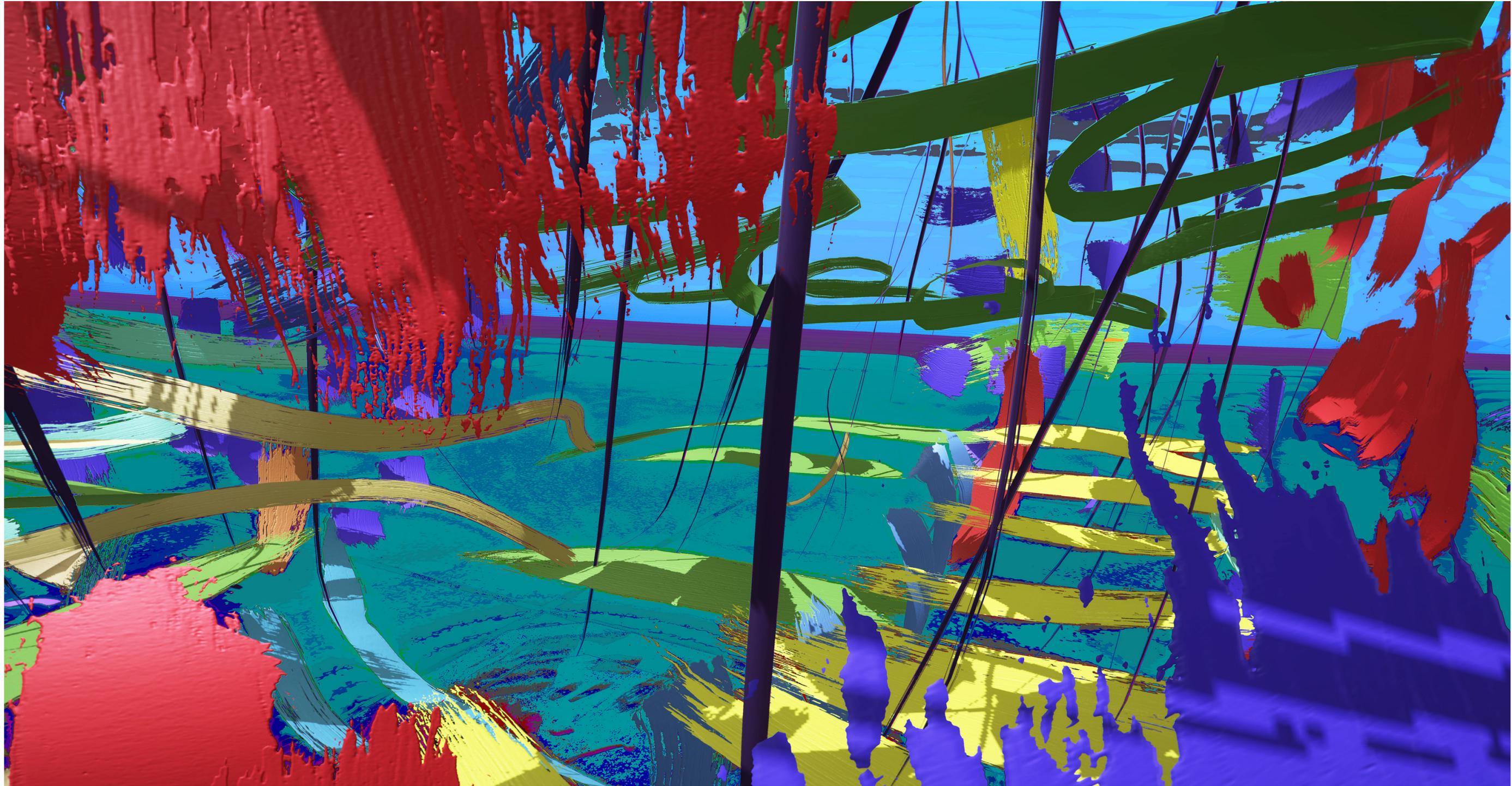


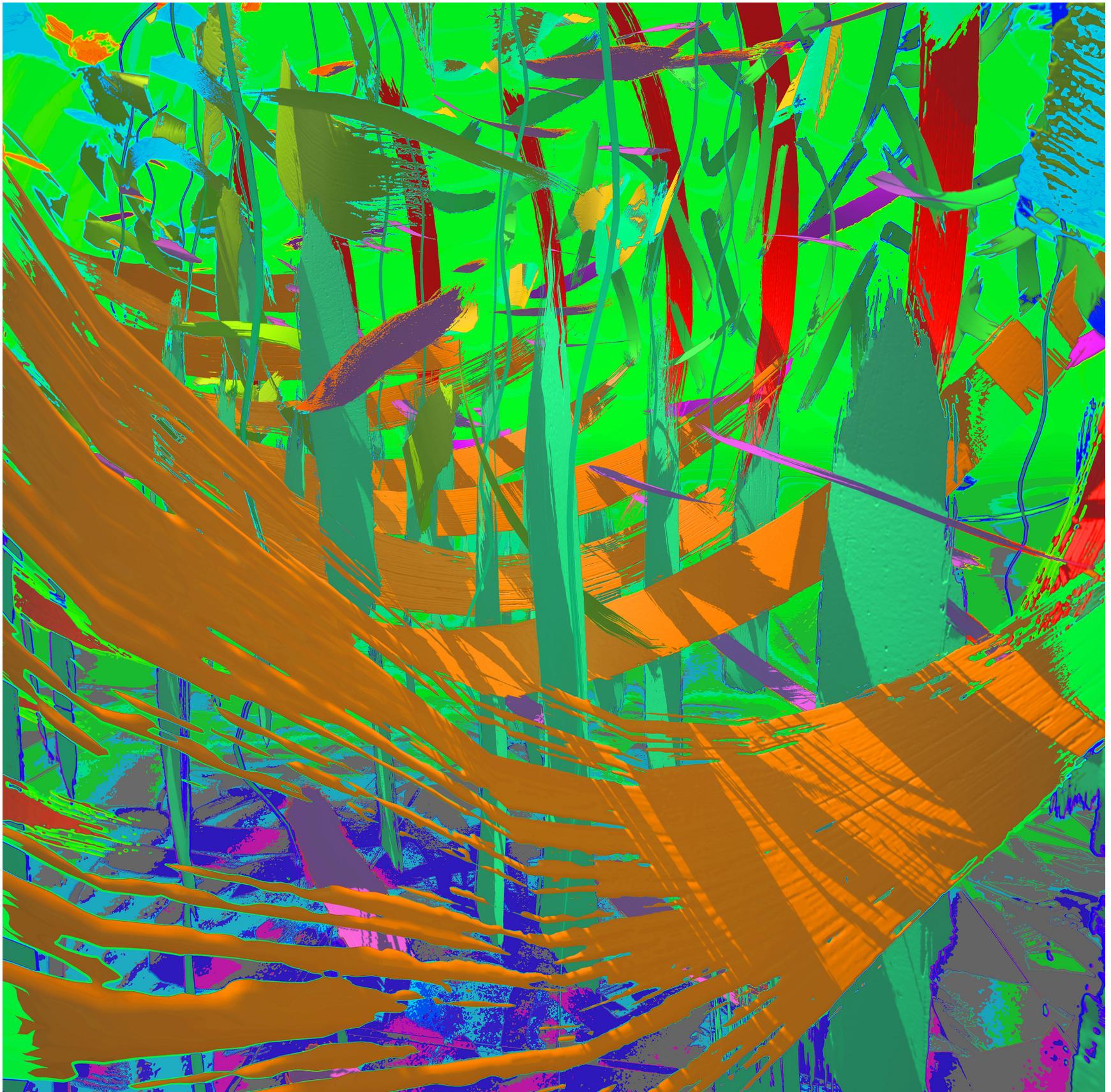












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