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**Topic: Art**

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**Artwork: trees on path, trees**

**Abstract:**

I am mimicking the 'digital revolution' when I work with the computer to integrate, replicate, and generate.

The paint represents the analog world. Nothing goes on or changes from one state to another without going through a transition. There is something so tangible about painting with oil - totally different from manipulating images on a screen. I like contrasting the thick juciness of the paint with the smoothness of the print.

In "trees on path, trees, I painted with oil on board and scanned it into the computer. I then manipulated the work by copying and pasting selected areas, pushing them around, much as a painter pushes paint around. The work is composed by integrating, replicating, and generating certain selections of the painting. I then printed the work onto a large canvas and finally applied paint to the print.

The unique vocabulary of "copy, paste, copy paste, copy, that runs throughout my collage paintings mirrors both the computational speeds of our digital age, which integrates unparalleled amounts of information and the evolving technology of generation and replication.



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**"trees on path, trees", oil and inkjet print on canvas**

## How Does the Analog “talk” to the Digital? How Does the Bit Give Voice to the Atom?

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### Abstract:

I am mimicking the ‘digital revolution’ when I work with the computer to integrate replicate, and generate. The unique vocabulary of “copy,paste,copy,paste,copy that runs throughout my collage paintings mirrors both the computational speeds of our digital age, which integrates unparalleled amounts of information and the evolving technology of generation and replication.

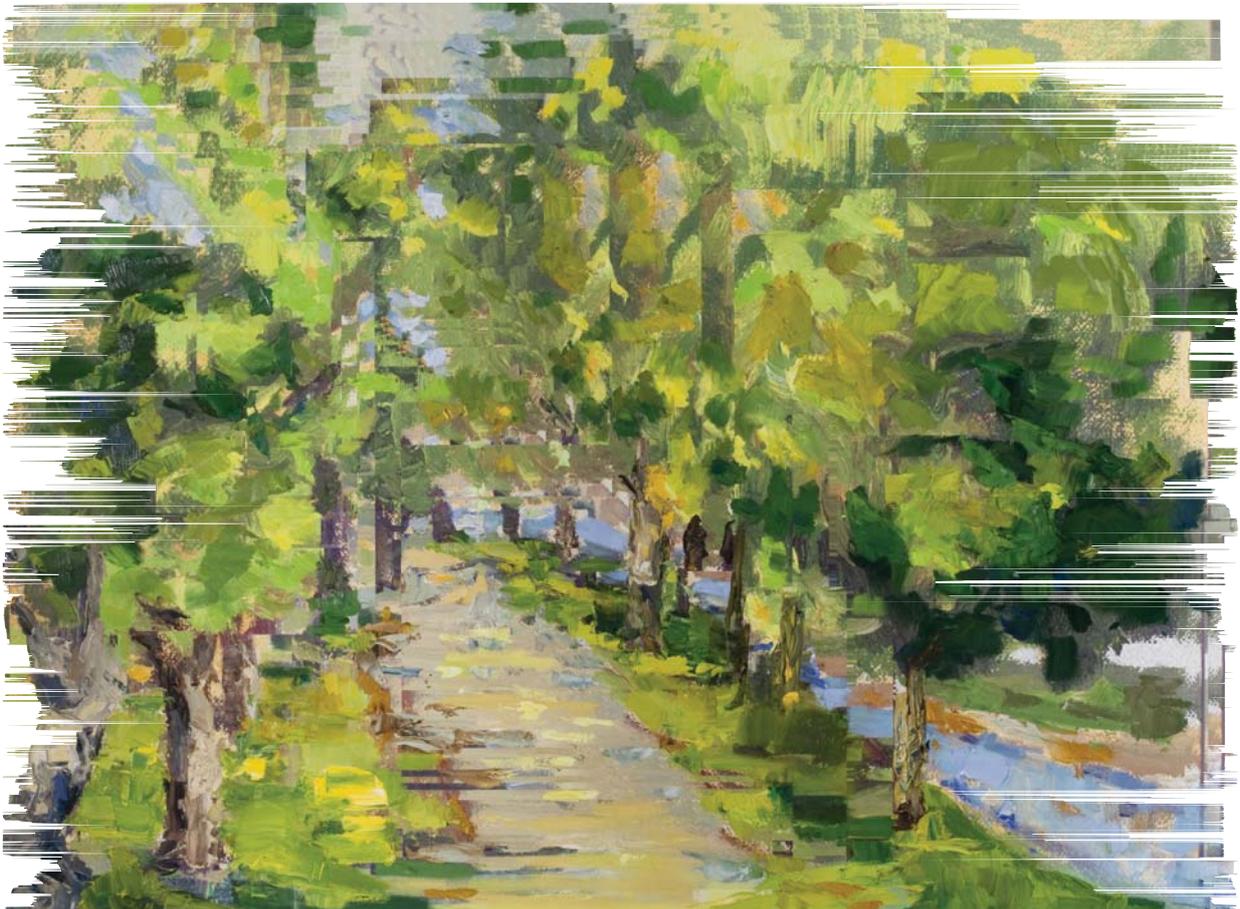
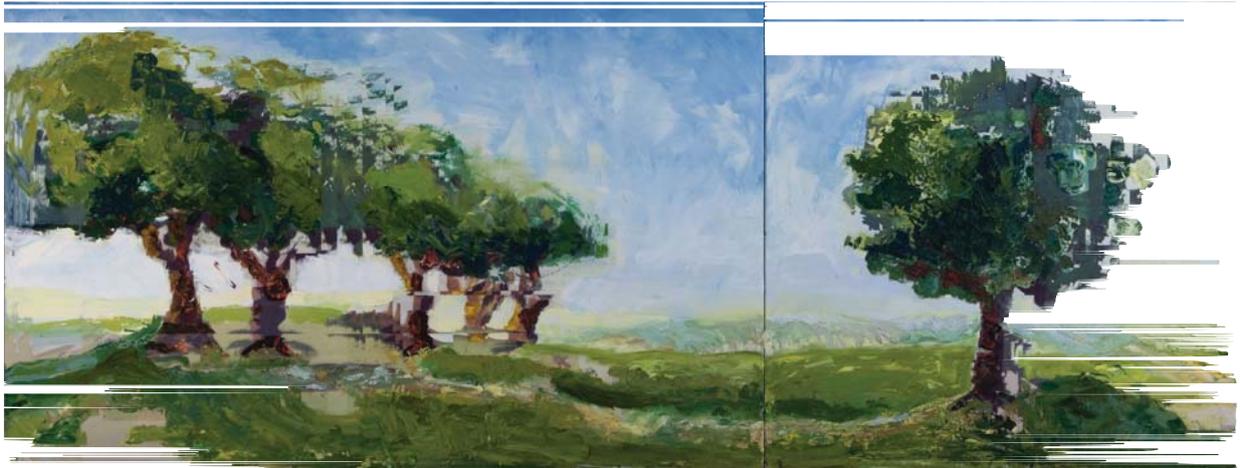
Having been passionate about painting since early high school, it was with great anticipation that I began my training as a graphic artist at Southern Illinois University (1978-1983) before ultimately receiving my MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (1999). During those years of initiation, I learned the essential principles and skills of illustration, layout, design and hand-lettering. My teachers were meticulous in their grading, using magnifying glasses to make sure each and every letter was perfectly drawn...and I, therefore, was equally meticulous, often working for hours on a single word. We also learned to use press type in our layouts; this involved the tedious transfer of letters from a font-filled sheet by rubbing or burnishing them on to a page with a ball-tipped stylus. While time-intensive, this was definitely more expedient than hand lettering, but letters could crack, descenders could separate on the descent, and alignment could easily stray offline.

My first brush with technology, so to speak, occurred after my undergraduate studies while working at a package design firm. Here I sized and resized type and images on a photocopier to achieve scale and relationships. Compared to my student days of hand-lettering, you could say I was definitely picking up speed.

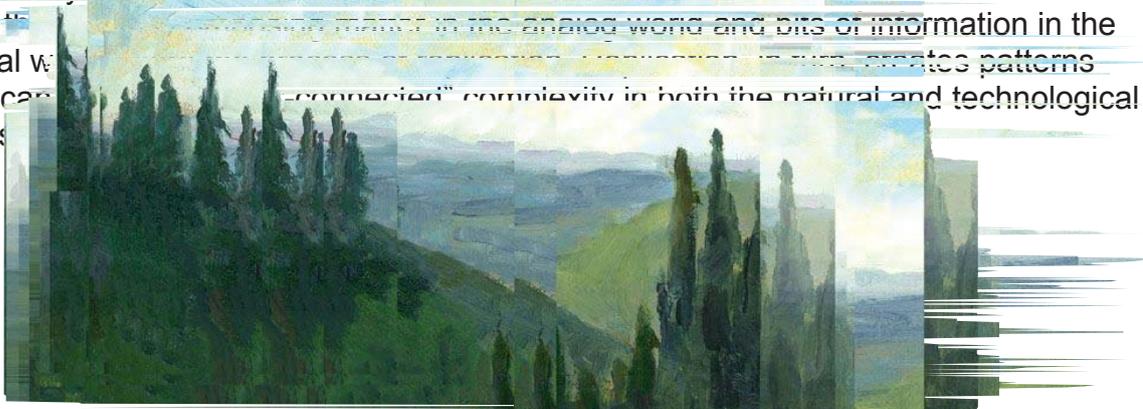
Fast-forward a decade to the early ‘90s and my first computer. Perfect lettering was all mine at the press of a button. The possibilities for manipulating images were not just fascinating, they were endless. Having lived the first half of my life without digital technology at my fingertips—and then watching how quickly it became imbedded in my world—compelled me to make art about this new Information Age.

Just as the artist Léger based his art on the mechanics of the Industrial Revolution, my replicated works reflect the mechanics of the Digital Revolution. My method uses the copy/paste tools of the computer to make an image selection and then replicate multiple copies of that selection, creating compositional elements.

In the works below titled: “trees, trees”, “trees on path, trees,” “tuscan hillside, hill” and “trees on bluff, trees”, I first painted the landscape with oil on board, then scanned the painting into the computer. Next, I manipulated the image by copying and pasting selected areas—pushing these fragments around, in similar fashion to a painter pushing paint around with a brush or palette knife. Replicating and integrating certain selections from the original painting, I achieved a final composition that was then printed onto a large canvas. Lastly, I returned to the work’s original medium, applying paint on to the digital print.



Unlike an emerging young artist of today, I am an artist who has grown up literally in two separate worlds: the analog and the digital. Because of my introduction to the computer later in life, I have been forever comparing and questioning how the physical and digital worlds are connected. I have now become an artist who works in both worlds, creating patterns that can be seen in both the analog world and bits of information in the digital world. The complexity in both the natural and technological lands



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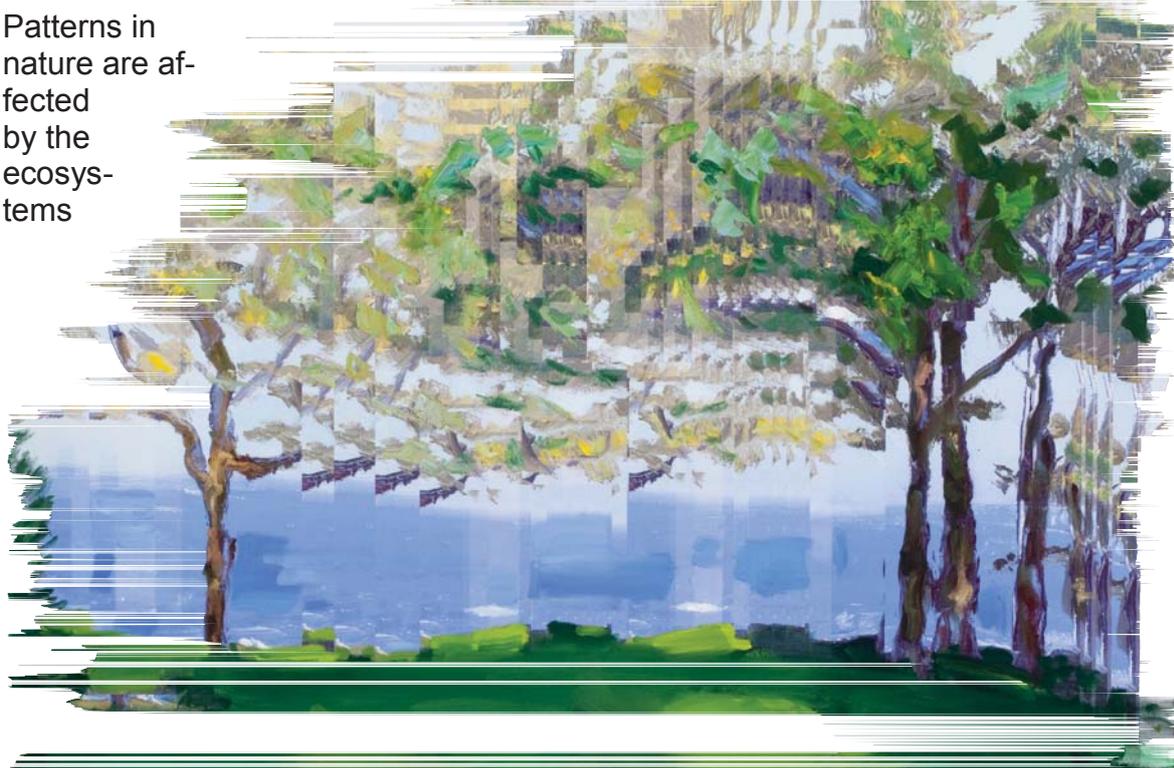


The analog world is one made of matter, a world in which nothing can progress or change from one state to another without going through a transition. The digital world is made of bits, the smallest atomic elements in the DNA of information. Unlike matter, a bit has no color, size or weight and it can travel at the speed of light. It is a state of being: on or off, true or false, up or down, in or out, black or white. [1]

In my work, paint literally represents the matter of the analog world. There is something so exquisitely tangible about painting with oil—the texture, the richness of stroke, the saturation. My experience of paint lives at the total opposite spectrum from the calculated yet creative manipulation of digital images on screen. My work attempts to juxtapose these two worlds—the analog and the digital, the thick “juiciness” of the paint contrasted with the smoothness of the computer-generated print.

On an experiential level, working with the computer enhances my view of life from a subatomic or deconstructed perspective. The fractal nature of a fern plant, the DNA of a tree, the binary number system used in computers...these are all encoded with a set of instructions that repeat. Are these repeating patterns related? Do they influence one another? How do they affect their surroundings?

Patterns in nature are affected by the ecosystems



they exist in and can only be described in terms of their organizing prin-

principles and the ways in which they relate to other complex dynamic systems. Even the smallest change can affect the whole as in the “butterfly effect.” This same phenomenon of cascading change is inherent in technology. As I work at the intersection of the analog and digital worlds, I question whether the onset of these complex new behaviors in technology will change the behaviors of nature. Stem cell research, global warming, nanotechnology, GMO, hybrid foods and plants...will all this change the way patterns in nature ultimately interact with one another?

My work expresses the simple idea of replication as I create scenes in nature. My vision is to emphasize that the very idea of replication is spinning off into complex systems in technology, analogous to the way in which DNA replicates itself to create interconnecting complex systems in nature.

As the Information Age continues to progress with its perpetually new complexities, we are experiencing a “hyper-connection” in almost everything imaginable. The digital world’s complex web of interconnecting algorithms dictates everyday decisions and is moving from the macroscopic systems like that found in large cities to the microscopic systems that affect almost everything we touch, from the products we design to the jobs we do every day. [2] These complexities are more complicated to predict because they interact in unexpected ways. Past behavior of a complex system may

not predict its future behavior. In a complex system, the outlier is often more significant than the average.[3]

This constant progression of complexity is so pervasive that one need only look at ordinary events in our daily lives to witness its changing effects. One of my markers to gauge this has been the progression of my choice of grocery stores. In the '80s, I would shop at simple stores called Dominick's and Jewel where I would buy canned soup and processed bologna. It reflected a time of mass culture, pop art, and advertising. In the '90s, shopping began to reflect global tastes, just as the world was becoming more global in nature. I now found myself in a more exotic market called Treasure Island, where I could find the latest gourmet fare from England, Spain, France or Italy. As life progressed, so did the complexity of my choices. Today you'll find me shopping organic at Whole Foods, which seduces me with the promise of a healthier lifestyle with aisle after aisle of natural treats, hormone-free milk, free-range meats and holistic remedies. While my example of grocery stores is rather basic, it demonstrates that these complex systems are escalating us to a hyper-natural existence, streaming down music, books, Nooks, Skype, Internet, Siri and tomorrow's next big techno advance, whatever that will be...but doing so in very simple intuitive ways that allow us access to anything we think about at the tap of a finger.

The vocabulary of "copy, paste, copy, paste, copy," that runs throughout my collage paintings is the language I use to express the replicated and generated patterns in nature as well as the evolving technology of replication and generation used in computer-based algorithms. Nature and technology are both systems inherently programmed to operate in determined and patterned ways, but the interactions that can occur within those systems are always changing. The further we delve into complexity in the Information Age, the closer we are to embracing patterns in a 'hyper-natural' existence.

## References

[1] Nicholas Negroponte, "Being Digital", vintage Books, New York, 1995

[2,3] Tim Sullivan, "Empracing Complexity", Harvard Business Review, Sept. 2011