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ART
SPRING 2025



DANELLIS
MANOLIS PROJECTS
ART GALLERY



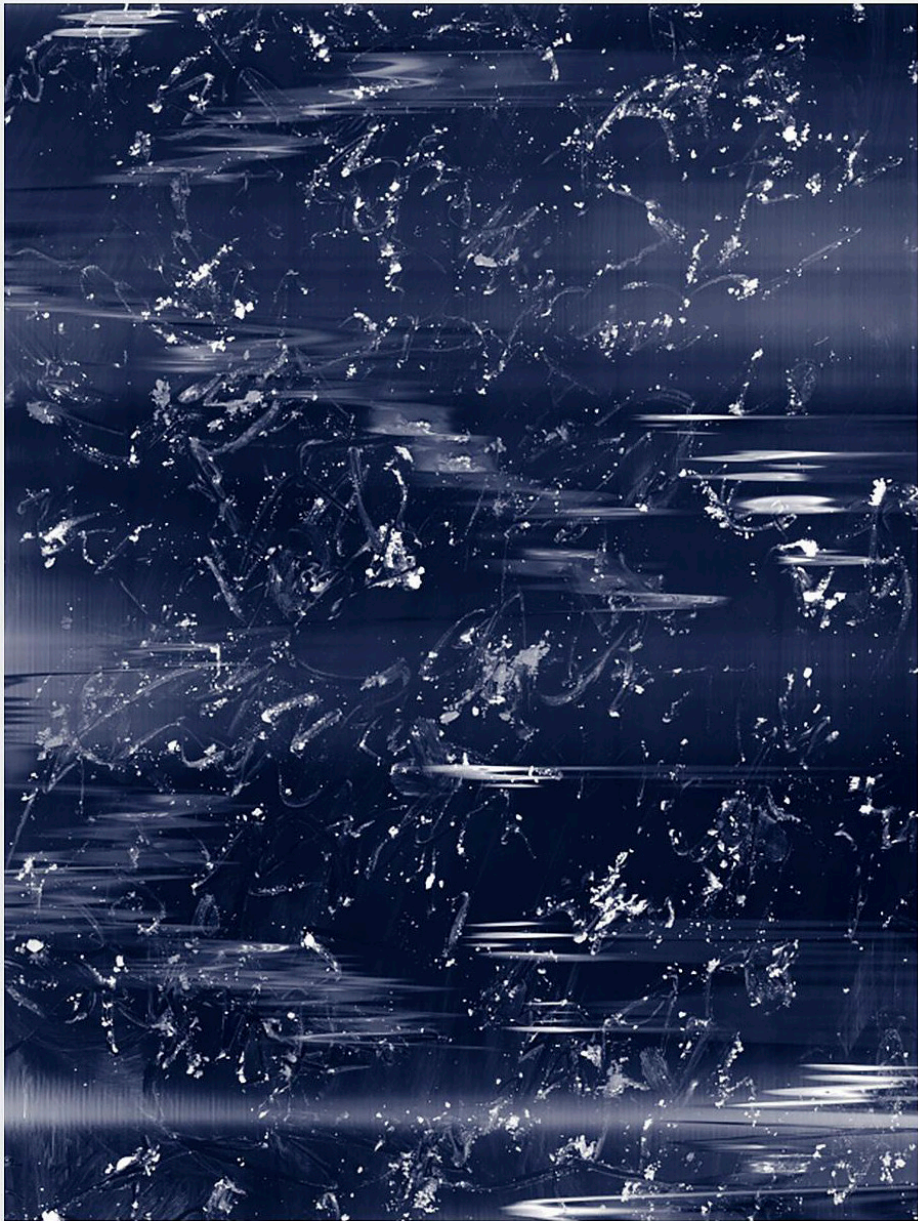
DAN ELLIS

NIGHT FLOWERS

by Jannete Joseph

Between 1897 and his death in 1926, Claude Monet painted no fewer than 250 works for his “Water-lilies” series, drawing inspiration from the pond on his Giverny estate. In this sprawling cycle, Monet fortified the roots of Modernist painting and sowed seeds for Abstraction by excising the horizon line from his aqueous landscapes. Traditionally, a painting had been a window onto a gravitationally anchored scene—a portal to a world bound by perspective and earth. Monet shattered that frame, focusing instead on the lily-strewn water’s reflections of the sky, atmospheric hues, and drifting clouds, their forms mingling with the murky undertones below. The result was a spatial ambiguity—a mesmerizing confluence of surfaces where the water’s plane merged seamlessly with the sky’s boundless expanse, hung vertically as a singular object that defied the viewer’s innate sense of orientation. With little effort, one can see in these heaven-collapsed plateaus a parallel to our screen-saturated present, where glowing rectangles grant instant access to “clouds” of data, vast and intangible. It is within this framework of radiance and dispersion that American artist Dan Ellis stakes his claim, his paintings offering deep reflections on the nature of image in a digital age—night flowers blooming in the dim glow of modernity’s pond, their roots tracing back to Monet’s radical upheaval yet branching into a new, shadowed terrain.

Ellis’s path to this twilight territory began with a jolt of clarity that reshaped his understanding of art’s possibilities. As a young gallery assistant immersed in late 19th- and early 20th-century American and French masters—works by the likes of Winslow Homer, Jane Peterson, Edward Henry-Potthast, and Maurice de Vlaminck—he spent long, quiet days, studying and selling these pictures of a bygone era. One morning, sunlight flooded the gallery, its harsh glare bleaching the paintings into near oblivion. From his seat at the desk, he watched as their subjects dissolved, leaving only the stark physicality of the works: impasto ridges catching the light, gloss and matte finishes clashing, the paint-dappled weave of canvas laid bare. This moment—where a picture’s essence could shift so dramat-



Left:
Dan Ellis
Scanner Pastel 2
(Ball Point Blue), 2015
Enamel behind glass
34 x 25.75 in.
(86.4 x 65.4 cm).

Bottom left:
Water-lilies photographed at
Claude Monet's House and
Gardens, Giverny, France.
Photo by Vanessa Castro.



ically under light's unsparing scrutiny—ignited a lifelong inquiry into Modernism's trajectory and its collision with today's hyper-digital landscape. Where Monet dissolved the horizon to merge earth and ether, Ellis excavates the surface itself, wielding scanners, computers, and code to reimagine painting's foundations. His oeuvre—spanning glass-sealed scanner drawings, painstaking paint-on-canvas experiments, and algorithmic color studies—traces this quest, cultivating a garden of forms that thrive in the half-light between touch and technology, between the tangible and the virtual.

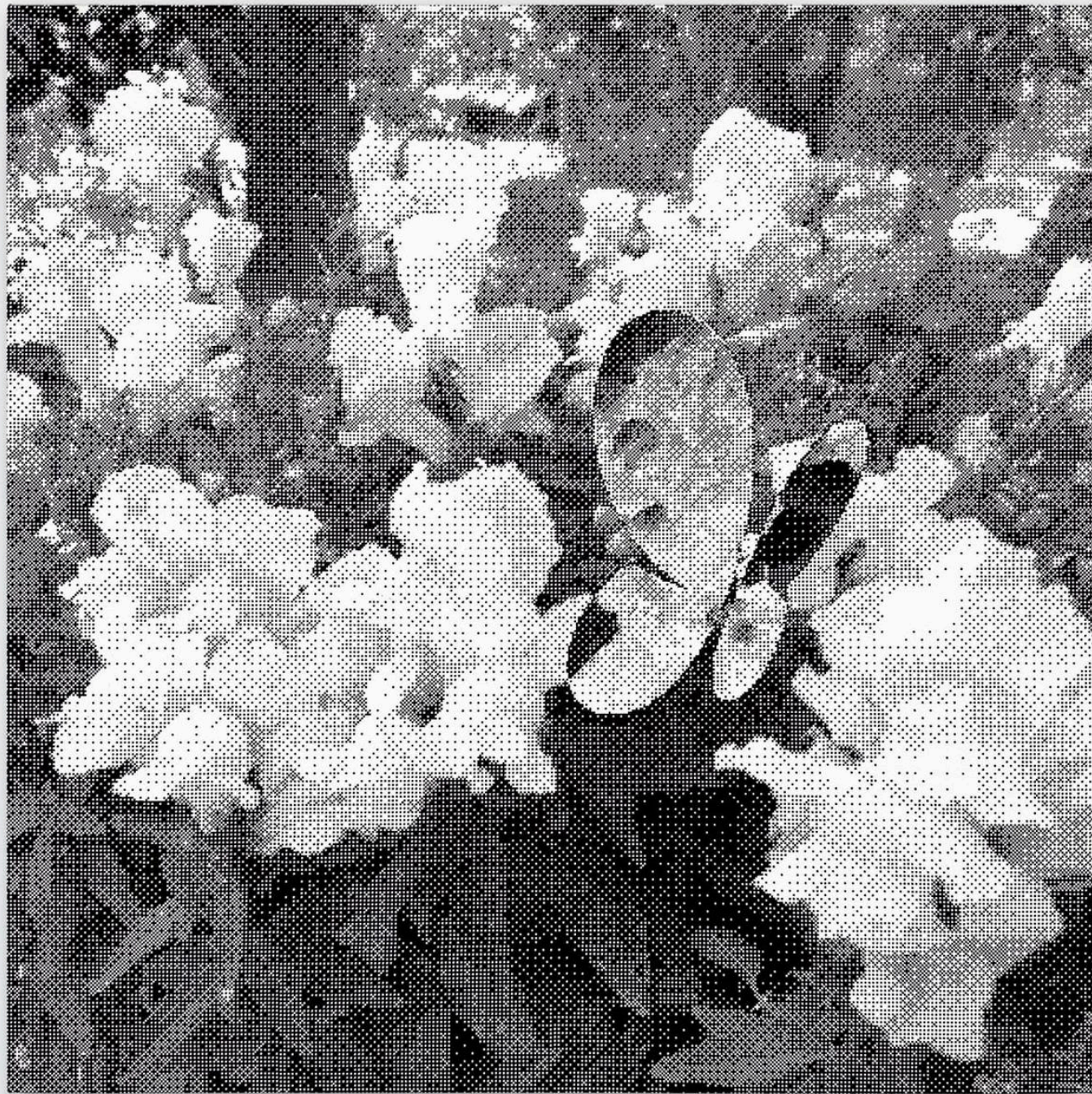
In his early work, Ellis reimaged action painting through a digital prism, drawing from the chaotic energy of Jackson

Right:
Dan Ellis
Canvas Scan I, 2015
Inkjet on canvas
32 x 41.5
(81.3 x 105.4 cm).

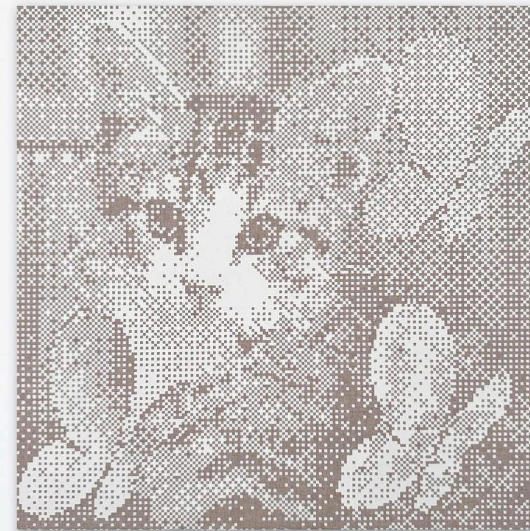


Pollock and the fleeting luminescence of Pablo Picasso's light drawings—those ethereal traces captured mid-air with a bulb and camera. Ellis sought to widen the gap between artist and surface, enlisting desktop scanners as collaborators in a process that both echoed and subverted these forebears. In "Scanner Pastel 2 (Ball Point Blue)" (2015), he hurriedly marked pastel on a scanner bed as its light raked the glass, recording not just the crisp, recognizable marks but also the blurred zags and zips of his hands in motion—a choreography of gesture caught in the machine's unblinking gaze. Silkscreened onto the reverse of a 34 x 26-inch glass panel and sealed in enamel, the piece fuses process and object—a luminous fossil of movement glowing with mechanical precision, collapsing time into a radiant plane, its surface smooth and unyielding as a pond at dusk.

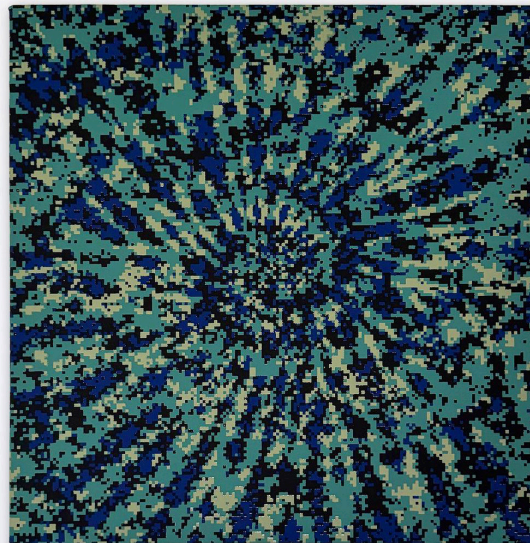
This scanner-driven method soon turned inward, with canvas itself becoming both tool and protagonist in a recursive dialogue. Ellis cut canvas, duck cotton, into frayed, brush-like shards, marked with bold Sharpie strokes, dragging them across the scanner bed to produce "Canvas Scan I" (2015). This images—canvas depicted on canvas—echo the recursive selfhood of digital avatars, a commentary on our curated online identities where the medium mirrors the message. Yet printing these compositions proved vexing: inkjet technology, as mastered by Wade Guyton's celebrated iterations on linen and paper, felt too transient for Ellis's intent, too replicable, too tethered to light-sensitive ink. Ellis pivoted to paint, zeroing in on the binary of "support" (canvas) and "ground" (gesso)—a poetic stand-in for code's 1s and 0s, the on-off pulse of digital life. This shift, akin to



Dan Ellis, **August**, 2020, Acrylic gesso on canvas, 42.5 x 43.5 in. (108 x 110.5 cm).



Dan Ellis, **Embassy III**, 2020, Acrylic gesso on linen
12.5 x 12.5 (31.75 x 31.75 cm).



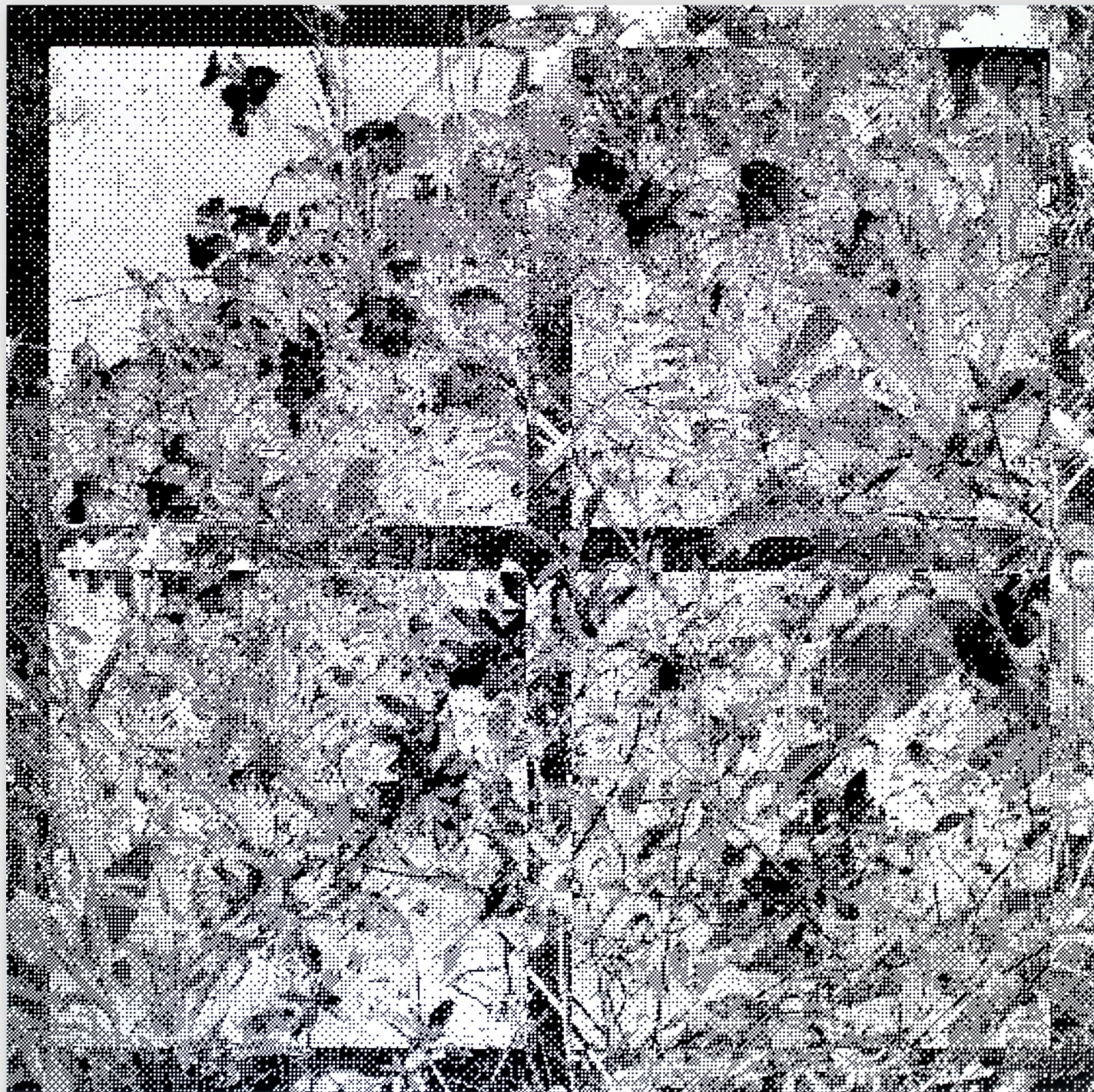
Dan Ellis, **Tie-Dye-Camo 1557**, 2024, Acrylic gesso on canvas
16.25 x 16.25 in. (41.3 x 41.3 cm).

Monet’s fusion of water and sky into a single, ambiguous plane, rooted his digital experiments in the tactile weight of painting’s history, forging a dialogue between the ephemeral buzz of the screen and the enduring heft of tradition.

The inkjet’s inability to print white—relying instead on paper’s inherent brightness—further honed Ellis’s technique against the grain of common technologies. In “Embassy III” (2020), he mastered a laborious method to transfer computer images into paint on unprimed canvas, bypassing ink’s fragility and embracing the slow alchemy of pigment. The MSN butterfly, a recurring figure in his work, flutters through these pieces as a slick emblem of technology’s omnipresence—a “smooth sentinel” of data, cookies, and caches lurking behind the screen, its wings a whisper of surveillance in an age of connectivity. In “August” (2020), the same butterfly patrols a flower garden, its form carved from an inverted photograph, a sleek inversion of figure and ground that recalls Monet’s play with reflection. “Window” (2021) pushes this further, doubling the Microsoft Windows logo as stretcher bars—a subtle nod to Frank Stella’s minimalist bands of paint, which echo their own confines, while exposing painting’s structural skeleton beneath its skin. These works oscillate between reverence and critique, their lean forms masking a sharp wit about our digital entanglements, a quiet rebellion against the gloss of the virtual.

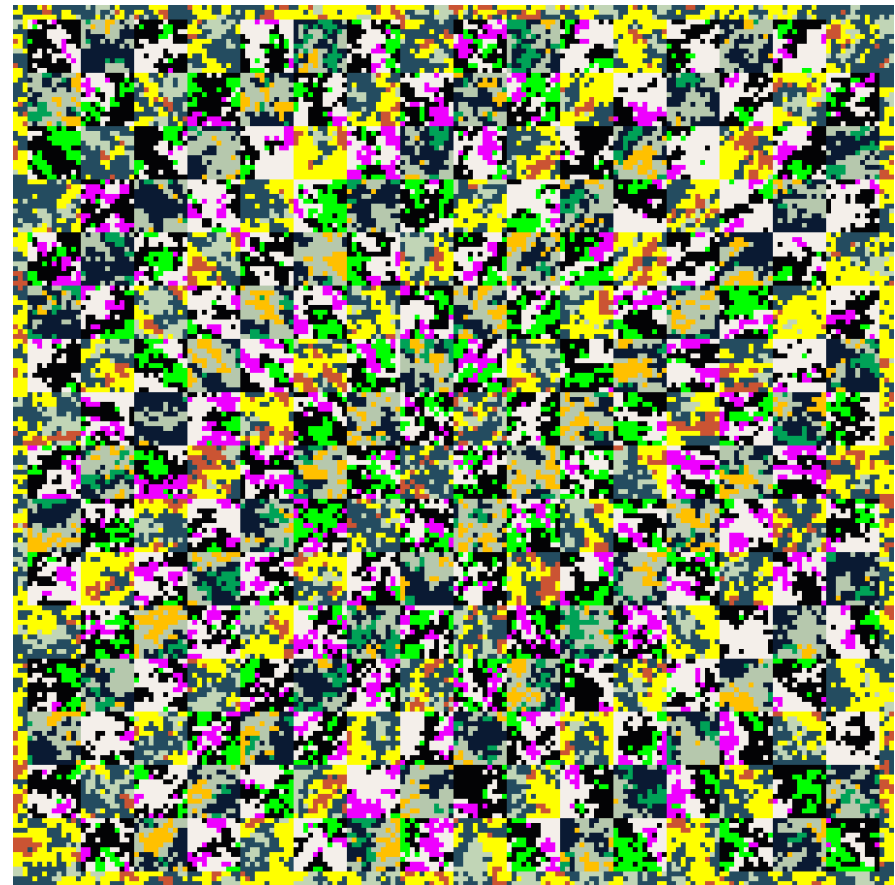
Ellis’s art thrives on such tensions—surface versus depth, analog versus digital, presence versus absence—each piece a delicate blossom in a shadowed field. His recognition of the pixel’s kinship with textile weave, evident in “Window”, draws a thread from tapestry’s “nomadic murals” (as Le Corbusier termed them, portable and rich with narrative) to the “threads” of social media discourse, where ideas unravel and reknit. We see this metaphor continued in “Tie-Dye-Camo” (2023), an NFT project on the Tezos blockchain where his self-written code churned through tens of thousands of color interactions sourced from Federal Standard 595 and Crayola charts—standards of industrial and childhood hue. After weeks of meticulous refinement, works like “Tie-Dye-Camo 0151” emerged—twelve hues in abstract harmony, a palette that might have captivated Georges Seurat’s pointillist precision or Josef Albers’s exhaustive chromatic studies at the Bauhaus. This vivid flare contrasts his earlier muted restraint, yet its algorithmic roots tie it to his ongoing dance with the machine as brush, a tool for unearthing the unexpected in a controlled chaos of color and form.

The uniqueness of Ellis’s approach lies in his insistence on translating these digitally recorded methods into the slow, deliberate permanence of painting—a rarity among contemporaries who lean toward the immediacy of prints or screens. Where many artists revel in the speed of inkjet outputs (like Guyton’s seamless iterations) or the flickering allure of actual digital displays, Ellis labors over a process that bridges the virtual and the physical with painstaking care. Creating a single work—say, “Embassy III” or “RESCAN 2”—demands not just the initial capture of scanner gestures or code-driven designs but a meticulous transfer into paint, often onto unprimed linen whose texture resists uniformity. This alchemy takes weeks, sometimes months, as he refines the interplay of gesso and



pigment to evoke the scanner's glow or the pixel's stitch. Unlike digital prints, which fade or screens that die, his paintings carry a sense of endurance—a defiance of ephemerality that harks back to painting's ancient promise of lasting witness. This choice sets him apart, rooting his art in a tactile legacy that resists the disposable churn of the digital age, offering instead a monument to time itself, each layer a testament to the hand behind the machine.

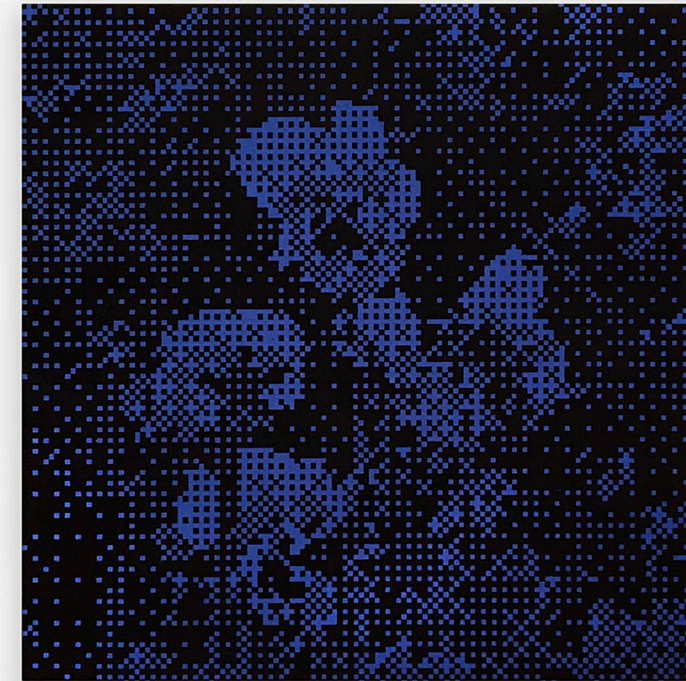
The "RESCAN" series deepens this shadowed garden, its roots sinking into the soil of negation. "RESCAN 1" (2023) tested the concept, a tentative sketch of what was to come, but "RESCAN 2" (2024) perfected an illusion of transparency—black and white gesso, typically the "ground," appearing behind the raw linen "support," upending painting's hierarchy with a quiet audacity. Scanner artifacts—abyss-like edges, photographic threads, interrupted



Dan Ellis, **Tie-Dye-Camo 0151**, 2023, NFT. (see tiedyecamo.io)

frayed gestures—fill the composition, evoking the digital void "behind" the screen, a space of infinite potential and absence. Influences abound: Navajo textiles, with their rhythmic push and pull of warp and weft, weave a tactile lineage, while Clyfford Still's late canvases—jagged fields where light seems to emanate from within—lend a brooding gravitas that transcends its technological origins. "RESCAN 2" offers a surface that is both painting and abyss.

This evolution builds further momentum in "Night Flowers" (2024), a work that trades the sunlit clarity of "August" (2020) for a dimmer, more introspective radiance—an elegy for light lost. Described as "sun-deprived," it serves as a quiet prelude to "fEr" (2025), where Ellis swaps square pixels for curved, stitch-like forms reminiscent of Philip Guston's charcoal simplicity—those late, lumpen shapes that hover between humor and melancholy. In "fEr", these



Dan Ellis, **Monet's Garden**, 2019, Acrylic gesso on book linen on wood
12 x 12 in. (30.5 x 30.5 cm). Private collection.

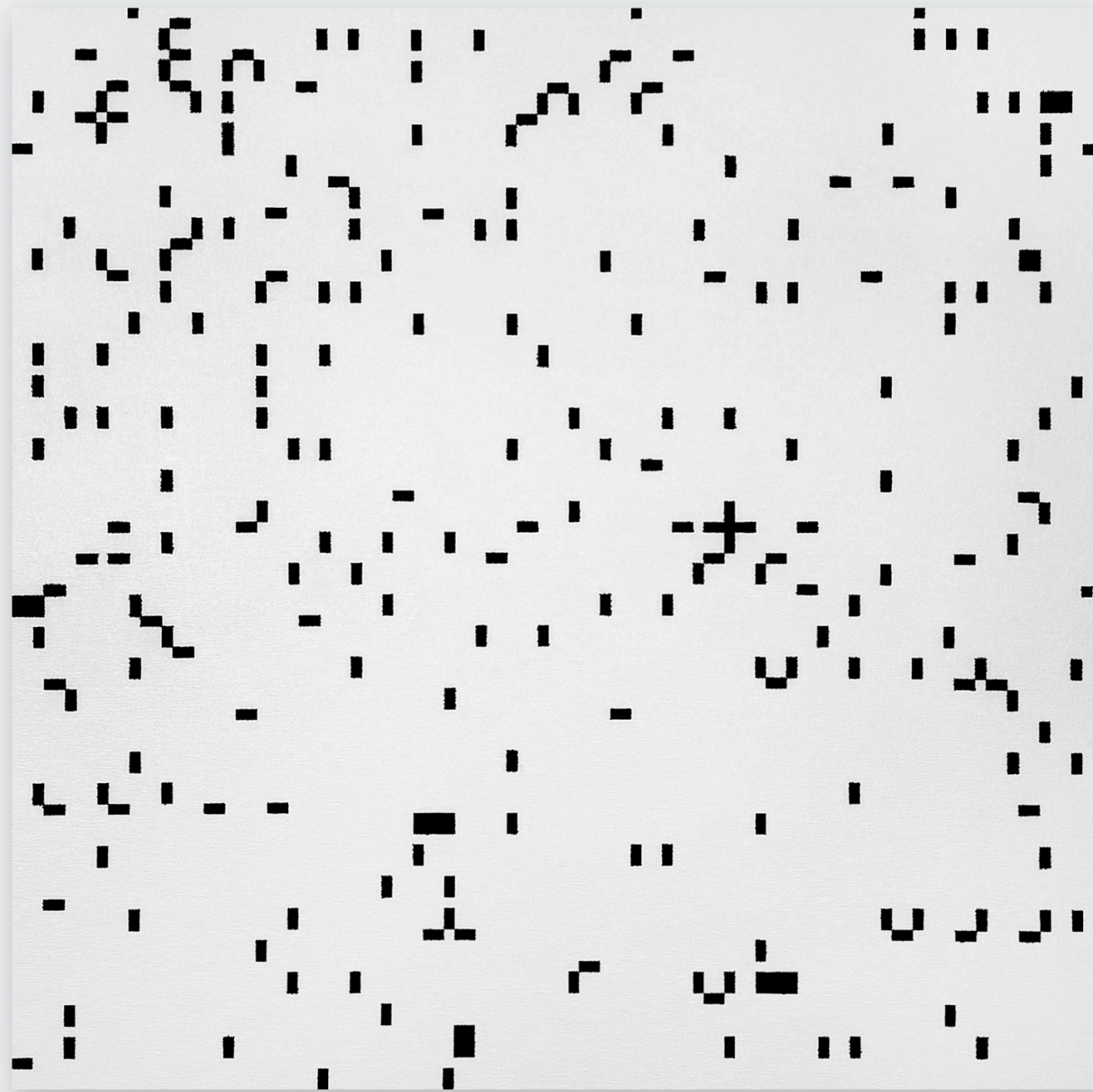
marks—pixel as thread—drift like emoticons or clouds, a nod to cloud computing's intangible sprawl, with the canvas weave as anchor, its warp and weft a stubborn tether to the real. “Night Flowers” lays the groundwork, its muted glow suggesting petals intentionally not unfurled in digital dusk—a garden cultivated where light falters, its forms emerging from the interplay of absence and presence that defines Ellis's practice. Together, they distill his wrestle with image-making in an age of screens, where the tangible and the virtual blur into a twilight ambiguity.

Formally, Ellis's work is taut yet layered, a study in contrasts and quiet insistence. His scanner drawings pit stark oppositions—pastel on glass, frayed canvas on digital sheen—against the subdued tones of unprimed linen and gesso in later paintings, where the weave itself speaks. Color, when it surfaces, is deliberate: “Tie-Dye-Camo 0151” dazzles with calculated vibrancy, a riot of synthetic hues, but elsewhere, he favors the quiet of earth and shadow—sand, ash, and

the faint gleam of night, as if the canvas glows with its own muted memory. Textures—frayed edges, smeared strokes, woven threads—invite scrutiny, recalling Agnes Martin's meditative restraint, her grids of pencil and paint whispering order, while grounding itself in the gritty, tech-inflected soil of urban life. His art demands slowness, a counterpoint to the instantaneity he critiques, its surfaces unfolding like petals under dim light, each mark a moment held against the rush of time.

Contextually, Ellis occupies a liminal niche—a space between traditions, neither fully here nor there, yet richly his own. His lineage stretches from Arte Povera's material rigor to Richard Tuttle's understated poetics, refracted through a 21st-century lens of scanners and screens. Arte Povera, born in Italy's turbulent 1960s, saw artists like Alighiero Boetti, with his embroidered maps and woven texts, and Jannis Kounellis, with his sacks and steel, strip art to its raw essentials—canvas, thread, coal—celebrating the

Left: Dan Ellis, **RESCAN 2**, 2024, Acrylic gesso on raw linen, 76 ½ x 55 in. (194.3 x 140 cm).



Dan Ellis, **fEr**, 2025, Acrylic on canvas, 31 x 31 in. (78.7 x 78.7 cm).



Dan Ellis in his studio. Photo by R. Benjamin Boerum.

mundane as a rebuke to industrial excess. Boetti’s tapestries, painstakingly stitched to chart geopolitical flux, share Ellis’s fascination with weave as meaning, while his playful rigor finds echo in Ellis’s pixel-threads. Tuttle, meanwhile, offers a softer lineage: his wire pieces and cloth scraps, fragile and small, whisper truths through their modesty, much as Ellis’s “fEr” or “Night Flowers” coax poetry from the overlooked. Yet Ellis transforms these roots—where Arte Povera opposed the machine and Tuttle sidestepped it, he embraces it, folding scanners and code into a practice that honors the past while peering into the digital now. Critics might find his innovations too subtle, his voice too hushed amid louder contemporaries clamoring for attention. But this is his strength: Ellis’s work blooms gradually, a meditation on how technology redraws not just what we see, but how we apprehend it—a quiet insistence on looking deeper into the shadows.

What endures is the quiet ache beneath his precision, a thread that runs through his shadowed blooms. “RESCAN 2”, “Night Flowers”, and “fEr” don’t merely depict absence; they nurture it, their negated grounds and stitched pixels unfolding like night flowers in the half-light of a digital dusk—petals of paint and code against an abyss. Ellis eschews sentimentality, dissecting this loss with a clinician’s eye—a mirror to our glowing, fragmented lives where screens promise connection yet deliver isolation. Like Monet peering into his pond, catching the sky in its depths, Ellis gazes into the screen, coaxing night flowers from its shadows—radiant, elusive, and stubbornly alive in the dim glow of our making.

<https://danellis.studio>