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## Review: Im/material: Painting in the Digital Age (Sophia Contemporary)



Nothing is quite what it seems in Sophia Contemporary Gallery's **Im/material: Painting in the Digital Age**, a closely curated show including twenty works by eight artists working at the intersection between the immaterial realm of 1s and 0s and the material facts of canvas, ink and paint.

The most glossy, artificial-looking works turn out to be assiduously hand-crafted. Using machines instead of brushes, **Chris Dorland's** UV-printed paintings of horizontal screen glitch on shiny Alumacore panelling present the digital imagery of online content with the scale and unique presence of painting. The surface sheen belies the laborious compositional process in which sections are printed out, coated in UV gel, sewn together, and as often dismantled, over a period of weeks.



**Michael Bell-Smith** sticks vinyl-cut solid-colour shapes to shiny Dibond aluminium sheets. The compositions are abstracted, splattery and harder to parse than the Rauschenbergian collage imagery of Josh Reames where texts and objects (anvils, flags, indoor scenes) are recognizable and obviously traditionally painted. In **Anna Ostoya's** decorative acrylic collages strips and patches are physically stuck to the canvas with the bulk of the labour taking place on the surface rather than behind the scenes.

Copying nature in painting is arduous enough but copying digitally generated work by hand is a gloriously bloody-minded act. **Konrad Wyrebek** alternates mechanical and handmade layers in creating grid canvases of blown up pixels from corrupted digital images that he projects at scale onto canvas and copies by hand. **Matthew Hansel** uses photoshop to assemble painterly scenes reminiscent of classic surrealism. He paints from the screen with a mixture of cartoon and classical stylings and trompe-l'œil painterly illusions of canvas peeling from frame.



These works present a neat problem of a special kind of objective naturalism: artists faithfully copying what they see, even if what they see is wholly synthetic. **Martin Basher**'s shining vertical stripes on canvas look digitally granulated and machine printed but are painstakingly copied in oil and acrylic. The works suggest a paradoxical cyborg notion that today the reality of human nature is digital. **Ry David Bradley** makes straight dye transfers of digital abstracts onto superfine transparent mesh with handpainted frames. A USB stick containing the image as a file is visible beneath the ghostly physical surface, which it might outlive.

*Im/material: Painting in the Digital Age is at Sophia Contemporary Gallery London W1K 4QB until 17 November 2017*



### About AJ Dehany

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