

Heralding the realism in abstract painting

Fractals are mathematical representations of the workings of the universe. Their geometry is the result of iterative algorithms that change over time. They describe what is considered randomness with mathematical accuracy.

Twenty years ago, in his seminal work *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*, Mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot derived the term "fractal" from the Latin verb *frangere*, meaning to break or fragment. Each fragment (or fractal) is self-similar, meaning that each part contains the basic structure of the whole.

My use of fractal imagery plays on the idea of representation in art (especially in painting), while simultaneously figuring within the realm of the abstract. Even the physical act of painting is abstracted, subsumed by an artistic process in a Duchampian tradition. However, my pronouncement of these digital ready-mades does not imply finality, as the nature of these images is Nature itself – ever changing.

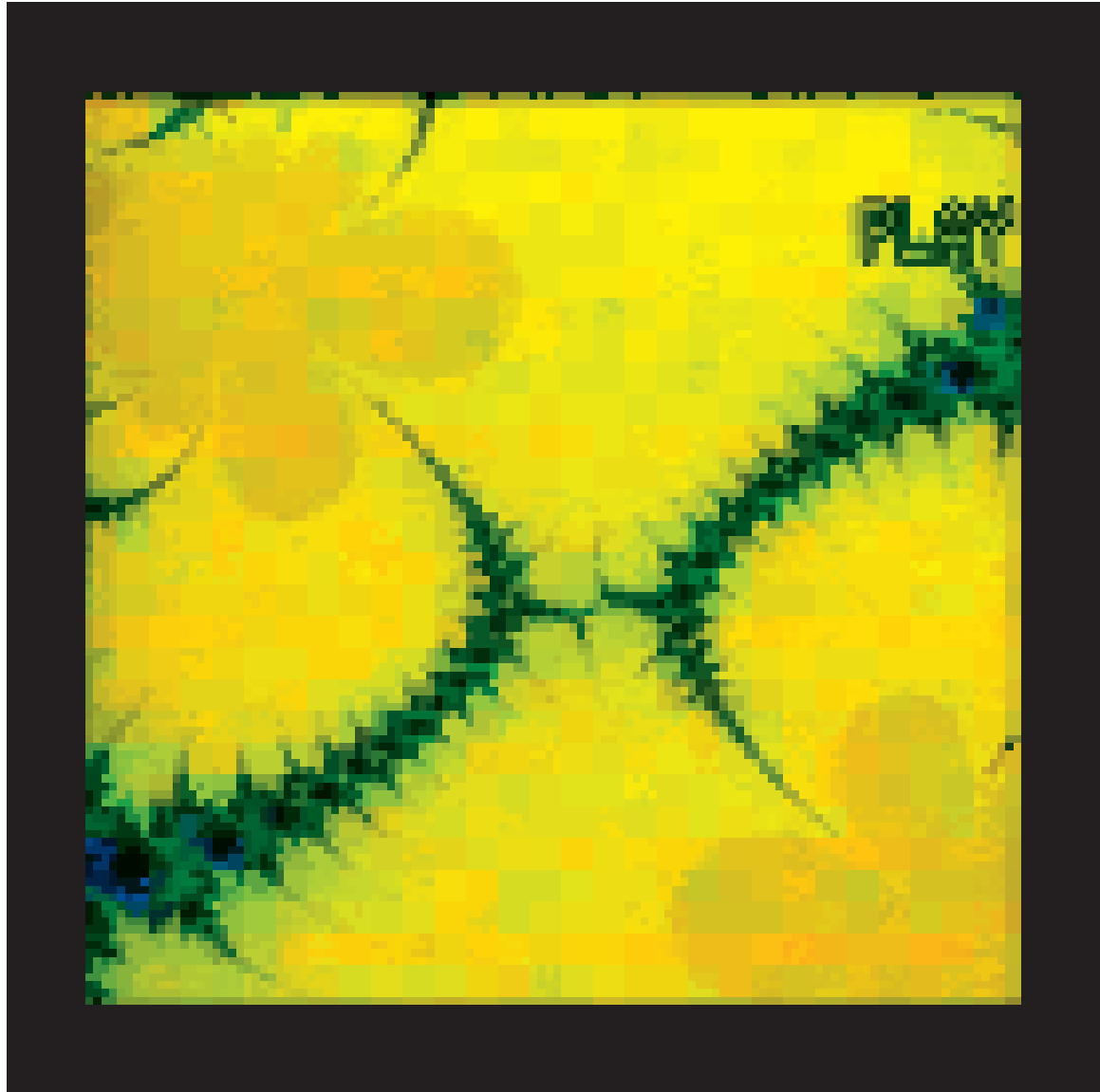
Play consists of three paintings that have been rendered digitally, from the initial conception to their final execution as gicl  prints on canvas. *Play* is preceded by *Foreplay*, a series of three 10 x 10 pixel excerpts from the larger images. *Foreplay* employs silkscreening techniques whose slight imperfections can be conceived of as obliterated by the mathematical threshold and scale of the *Play* series that follows it.



The visibility of the halftoning process speaks of the nature of print and draws on the pop art tradition of Warhol and Liechtenstein. It also underscores the plastic nature of the images by exposing the processes by which they were composed in order to be perceived by the human eye. Their pixelized origin is apparent and further deconstructed into four halftone screens: cyan, magenta, yellow and black.

These images are a transposition of media; the remaining PLAY evokes their video past. A video signal fed into a computer returned the fractal images to their source media, but in new form (and with it new meaning). The mathematical expression of the fractals is no longer a dynamic function – they have become art-objects/picture-files. They form narratives reminiscent of time-based media's, yet the image pixelization in *Play* affords rectilinear stability and brackets a reading of individual images transgressing freeze-frame "nature."

The next transposition of media attempted here is photographic. *Nile*, like *Play*, was conceived digitally, but began as a mathematical formula on my computer. From the visualized equation, a digital negative was generated, then used to create a print on photographic paper; nowhere was a camera used in the process. I have counted on Photography's strong bond to realism and landscape to faithfully reproduce *Nile*, while contributing its random grain structure so unlike the pixel. *Nile* is the first of an ongoing series of formulae/photographic landscapes.



Photorealism is oft thought of as the logical conclusion of representational painting. Yet, Fredric Jameson cites photorealistic painting as a copy not of reality, but of a photograph, which is already a copy of the original. *Play* copies an original, yet realism, photography (or any technologically driven process of recording images) and painting take on a new configuration as the original is in itself a mathematical abstraction.

The seventeenth century philosophy of René Descartes separated the I from the world, inspiring a new scientific ideal: a mechanistic, fragmented model of the universe. This fragmentation of nature finds a contemporary manifestation as the pixel, the atomic equivalent of a grain of sand.

"In the Mind's eye, a fractal is a way of seeing infinity," says author James Gleick. Conversely, the biological eye receives images increasingly moderated by technology and its reductive codification of objective reality. Simulations of reality are prevalent in the video games and cinematic effects that substitute for the immersive space once offered exclusively by painting. As mental landscapes adjust themselves to these new realities, painting offers a visual language established through historical precedent that can adequately maintain the viewer's interest to provoke contemplation.

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