

**ALEXANDER REBEN | WRITE A CONVOLUTED EXHIBITION TITLE FOR
ALEXANDER REBEN'S SHOW IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY
NOVEMBER 2 - DECEMBER 7, 2024**

ALEXANDER REBEN

WRITE A CONVOLUTED EXHIBITION TITLE FOR ALEXANDER REBEN'S SHOW IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY

"One might prudently reconsider attending Alexander Reben's latest foray into algorithmic aesthetics at the Charlie James Gallery, where the incessant cacophony of synthetic semiotics risks diluting the very essence of avant-garde ingenuity. Reben's ostensibly groundbreaking AI constructs, while pushing the boundaries of post-human expressionism, inadvertently succumb to a labyrinthine opacity that obfuscates any semblance of genuine emotional resonance. The exhibition, rather than serving as a palimpsest of innovative discourse, devolves into a simulacrum of mechanized profundity, rendering the spectator's engagement a Sisyphean endeavor. In an era where authenticity in artistic praxis is paramount, Reben's digital reveries may ultimately leave the connoisseur yearning for a more substantively corporeal dialogue."

– ChatGPT

Charlie James Gallery is pleased to present *Write a convoluted exhibition title for Alexander Reben's show in the basement of the Charlie James Gallery*, an exhibition of works by the conceptual artist and MIT-trained roboticist **Alexander Reben**, who utilizes artificial intelligence to create artworks that spring from the interface between human and machine. Reben's open-hearted approach to technology allows space for both wonder and humor. His works take a wide array of forms, ranging from large, machine-made metal sculptures to an ongoing series of ChatGPT-generated self-critical texts that playfully skewer the language of stereotypical artspeak. Elsewhere, Reben incorporates viewer input into continually evolving artworks that represent a collaboration between artist, viewer, and algorithm.

The centerpiece of the exhibition is the large wall-based sculpture *AI and the Anvil*, in which small, intricate waves ripple across a vast metal surface. With this work, Reben explores the realm of directly converting language into tangible sculpture. Using the giant metal-forming robots of Machina Labs, Reben iteratively collaborates with an AI that autonomously generates code that creates generative 3D sculptures as instructions for massive robotic systems. This enables the robots to sculpt sheet metal into artworks with remarkable precision in a way impossible with other fabrication methods. Reben describes the performative nature of the sculpture's making as akin to a high-pressure tango, where each machine must move in precisely the opposite direction of the other to balance the immense forces required to manipulate metal. This poetic movement not only reflects the intricacies of their physical interaction but also embodies the delicate dance of creation itself.

Other works incorporate prompts in real time, transforming input from exhibition visitors into AI-generated images and text. *Speak Art Into Life* invites viewers to suggest ideas to a microphone, which AI converts into visual outputs that become exquisite corpse-style collaborative images. The images evolve over the course of the exhibition, growing and expanding in unpredictable ways. The use of four classic analog flap displays emphasizes the near-uncanny newness of the cutting edge tech that powers the work. By operating on the leading edge of what technology allows, Reben invites us to imagine possible futures for our relationship to machines, making room for a sense of play and even beauty in the boundaries between language and code.

ALEXANDER REBEN

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Alexander Reben is an artist who has spent over a decade creating work that probes the inherently human nature of the artificial. With his start at MIT Media Lab, Reben has long studied human-robot symbiosis and art, using experimentation and prototyping to delve into our intricate relationships with algorithms, automation, and amplification. Through the lenses of absurdity, humor, and mischief, his artwork highlights our inseparable evolutionary entanglement with the technology that shapes our existence.

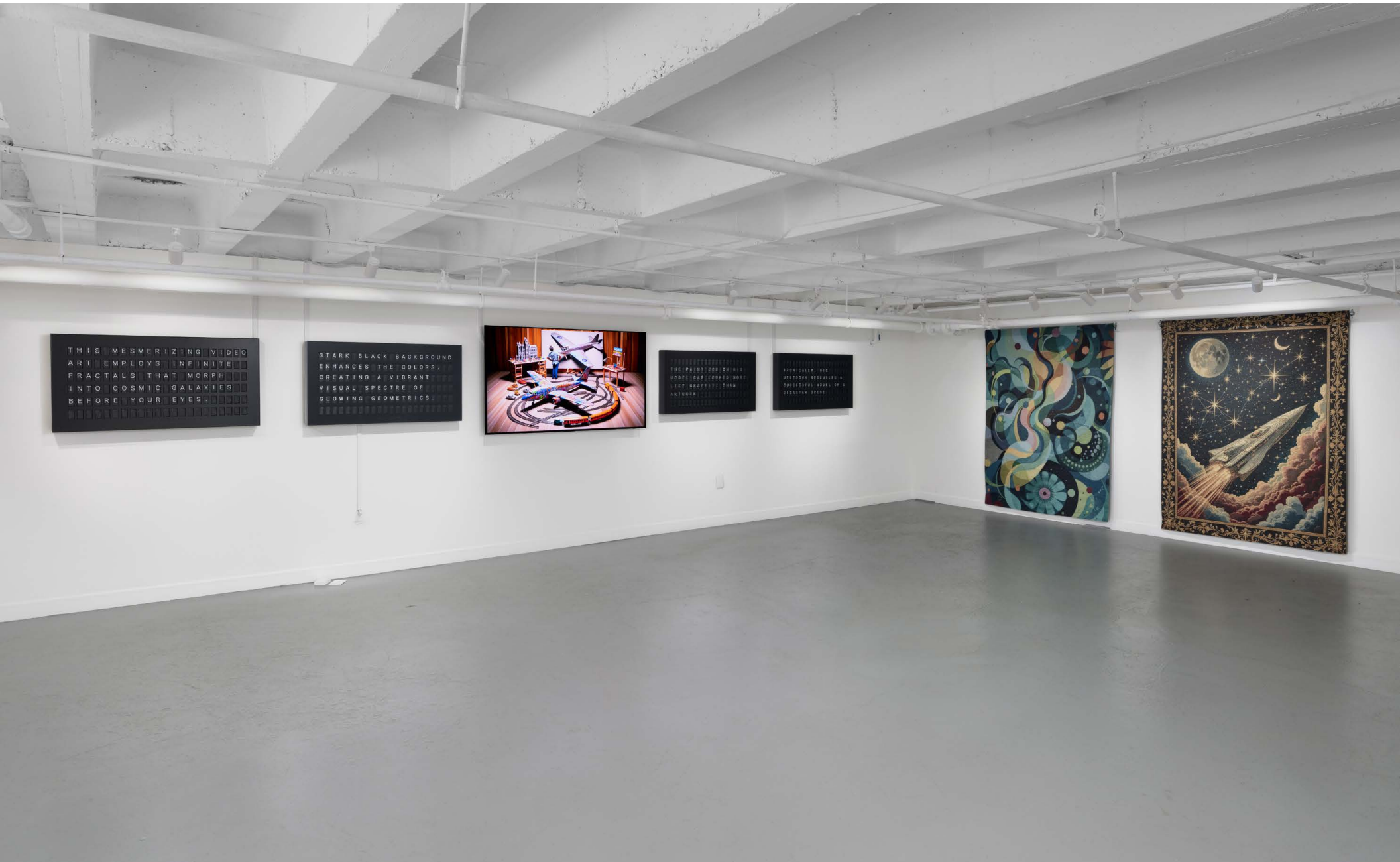
Reben has become a leading figure at the intersection of art and technology. He was OpenAI's first Artist in Residence, and his first solo museum retrospective, "AI Am I?", which included an exhibition of over 120 artworks, recently concluded at the Crocker Art Museum. His work has been exhibited globally at institutions including Ars Electronica, MAK Contemporary Art Museum, Vitra Design Museum, Design Museum Ghent, and the Vienna Biennale. As an expert in his field, he has lectured at TED, SXSW, TTI Vanguard, Google, UC Berkeley, SMFA, CCA, MIT, and Harvard. Reben's work has been covered by CNN, NPR, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Washington Post, Fast Company, Filmmaker Magazine, New Scientist, BBC, PBS, Discovery Channel, Cool Hunting, MIT Technology Review and WIRED, among others.

Photo Credit: Rozette Halvorson for The New York Times



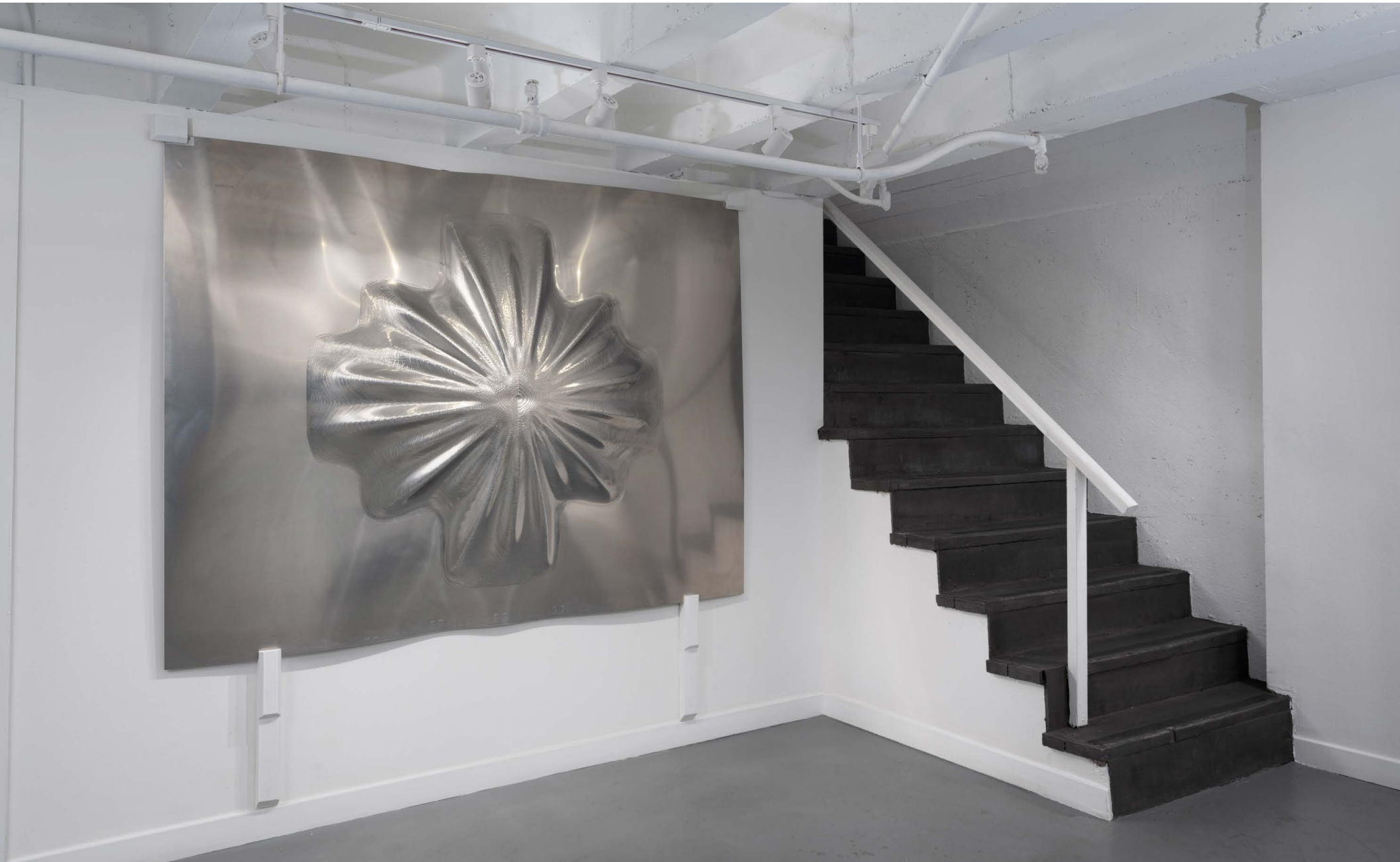
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SHOW IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY



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Alexander Reben
*Disruptive Reflexivity in the
Flux of Becoming*
Aluminum
60 x 80 x 10 inches
2024



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WRITE A CONVOLUTED EXHIBITION TITLE FOR ALEXANDER REBEN'S
SHOW IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY

Disruptive Reflexivity in the Flux of Becoming (2024)

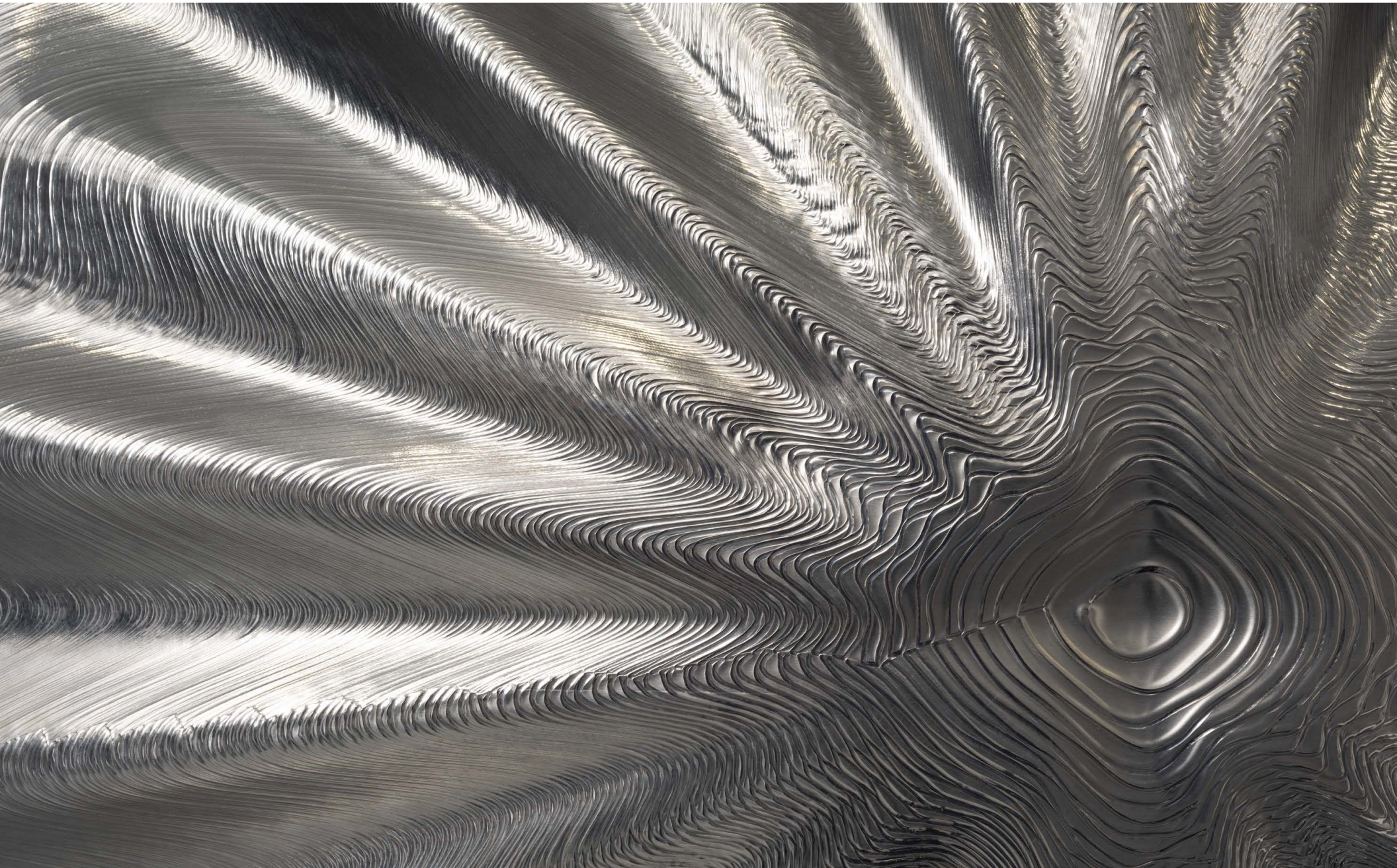
1. The artist describes the aesthetic qualities, physical fabrication limitations, and the digital file representation needed for the creation of generative sculpture for an AI
2. The artist works iteratively with the AI in natural language, honing the idea
3. A software program is created by the AI from this process, which creates generative 3D models of artworks
4. Artwork generated from this software is chosen and given to robot metal working machines at Machina Labs
5. A physical sculpture is produced and presented as-is from the process

Process Video



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SHOW IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY

Alexander Reben
*Neverending Nuances of
Flipity Flappy*
Four split-flap displays,
monitor, computer,
electronics
Dimensions variable
2023



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WRITE A CONVOLUTED EXHIBITION TITLE

Neverending Nuances of Flipity Flappy (2023)

1. An AI generates a short description of an artwork
2. That description is expanded upon 3 more times
3. These 4 concepts are then displayed on split-flap displays
4. The 4 concepts are combined and turned into an artwork by a second AI and displayed
5. The process repeats creating a new artwork, with the previous artwork never seen again



ALEXANDER REBEN
WRITE A CONVOLUTED
EXHIBITION TITLE

Watch Video of AI
Creating This Artwork



SPLASHES OF VIBRANT
COLOR ENHANCE THE
PHANTASMAGORICAL
ELEMENT, INDUCING
WHIMSY AND WONDER.

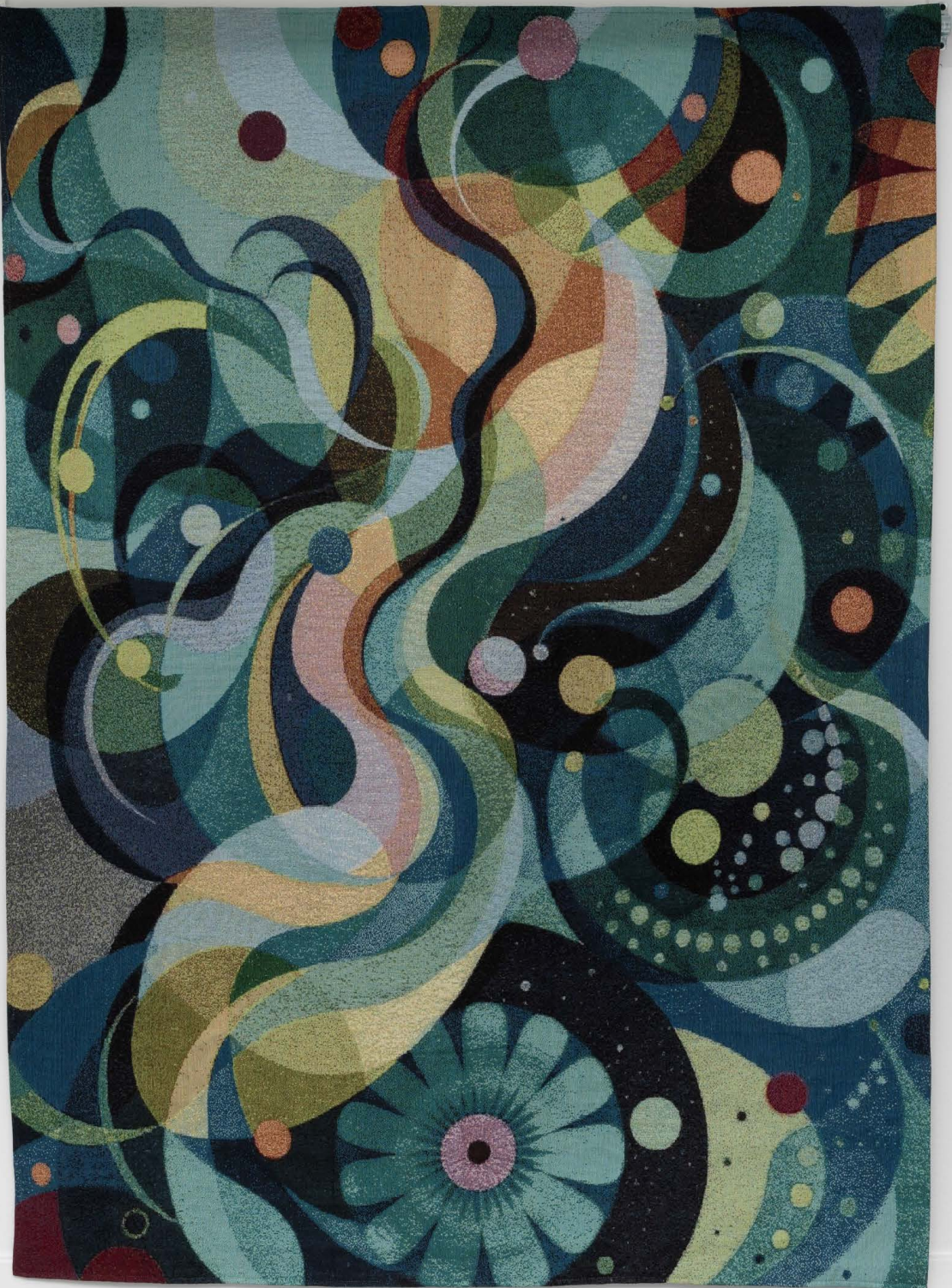
VESTABOARD

TWISTED FIGURES AND
FLOWING SHAPES BLOOM,
CREATING AN INDISTINCT
YET ENCHANTING WORLD.

VESTABOARD

ALEXANDER REBEN
WRITE A CONVOLUTED
EXHIBITION TITLE

Alexander Reben
Whispers of Avian Blossoms in Orbit
Cotton thread jacquard tapestry
71 x 52 inches
2024

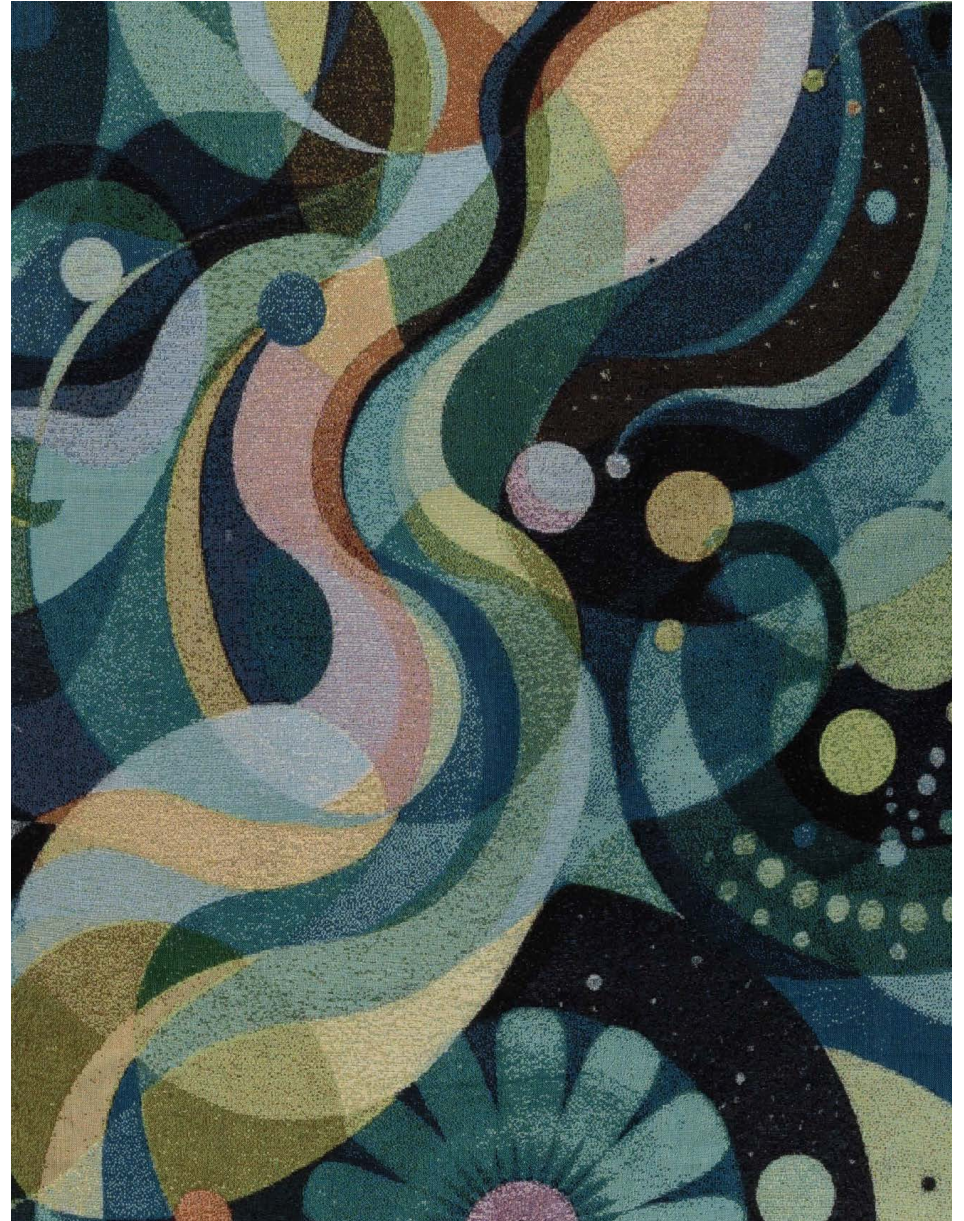


ALEXANDER REBEN

WRITE A CONVOLUTED EXHIBITION TITLE FOR ALEXANDER REBEN'S
SHOW IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY

Whispers of Avian Blossoms in Orbit (2024)

1. The artist describes the aesthetic qualities, physical fabrication limitations, and the digital file representation needed for the creation of generative sculpture for an AI
2. The artist works iteratively with the AI in natural language, honing the idea
3. A software program is created by the AI from this process, which creates images of abstract artworks
4. Artwork generated from this software is chosen and given to a second AI which reinterprets the artwork into a new artwork image
5. The final image is woven on a Jacquard loom



ALEXANDER REBEN
WRITE A CONVOLUTED
EXHIBITION TITLE

Alexander Reben
Voyage of the Celestial Alchemist
Cotton thread jacquard tapestry
71 x 52 inches
2024



ALEXANDER REBEN

WRITE A CONVOLUTED EXHIBITION TITLE FOR ALEXANDER REBEN'S SHOW IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY

Beyond the Weft of Earthly Bounds (2024)

1. An AI describes a tapestry artwork
2. That description is given to a second AI which turns the description into an image
3. That image is woven on a Jacquard loom
4. A photo is taken of the tapestry and given to a third AI, which makes a wall label for it

Aurora Threadwell

Brittish

Beyond the Weft of Earthly Bounds 2021

Cotton tapestry

The confluence of classical decorative arts and retrofuturist aesthetics manifests in this compelling tapestry, where baroque ornamentation frames a distinctly mid-20th century vision of space exploration. The work juxtaposes traditional textile craftsmanship with the technological sublime, creating a temporal dialogue between the ancient art of weaving and humanity's eternal aspiration to traverse the cosmos. The gilded botanical border, reminiscent of medieval manuscripts and Renaissance tapestries, serves as a terrestrial anchor to the other-worldly scene within.

The piece's materiality - its very fiber - becomes a metaphor for the interconnected threads of human ambition and cosmic mystery. The baroque border serves not merely as ornament but as a philosophical frame, containing yet contradicting the infinite void it encircles. Here, the rocket pierces both clouds and conventional narratives, its trajectory questioning the very nature of progress and the arbitrary delineation between Earth and heavens. Multiple lunar manifestations create a fascinating tension between representation and reality - are we viewing actual celestial bodies, or merely their commodified symbols in an increasingly commercialized space age? The work operates in a liminal space between medievalist revival and retro-futuristic speculation, challenging viewers to consider how their own understanding of progress is inevitably filtered through the warp and weft of historical consciousness.

"I wanted to trap the dreams of Werner von Braun in the same threads that once captured unicorns. There's something deliciously ironic about using one of humanity's oldest technologies to depict our newest aspirations. When medieval artisans wove the stars into their tapestries, they were as much astronauts as any of us." - Aurora Threadwell

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SHOW IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY

Alexander Reben
Speak Art Into Life
Display, podium,
electronics, computer
Dimensions variable
2023



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SHOW IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY

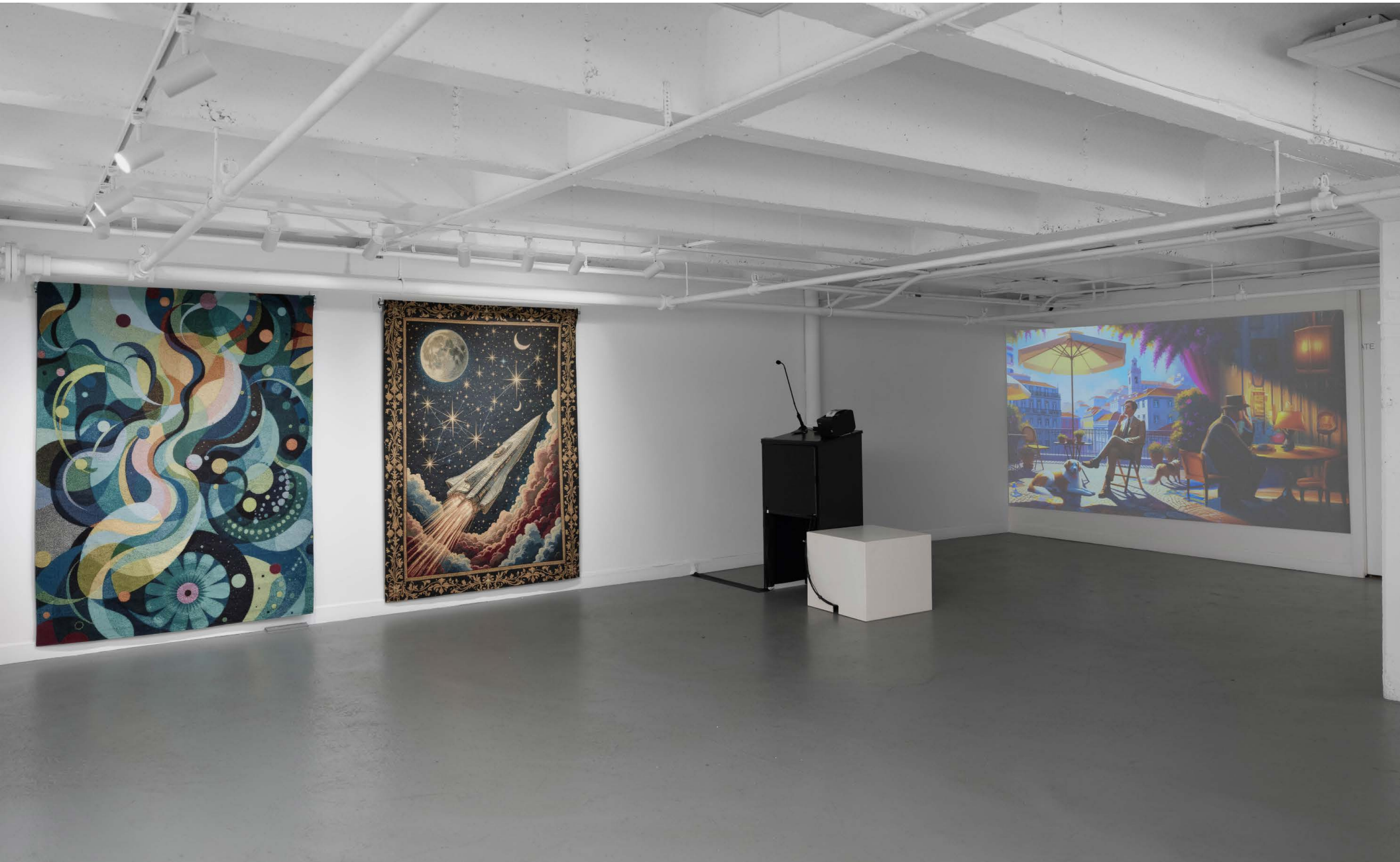
Speak Art Into Life (2023)

1. The user "speaks their imagination" into the microphone
2. Their input is converted into a description of an artwork by AI
3. The description is turned into 4 artworks by a second AI
4. The user is presented with 4 options to choose from
5. The user's choice is displayed, and they receive a receipt with the text of their artwork, the artwork image, and a QR code to download the artwork
6. The user's artwork is blended into the artwork created by the user before them, creating a unique strip of artwork created by all those who participated



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ALEXANDER REBEN
WRITE A CONVOLUTED
EXHIBITION TITLE

Alexander Reben
Artificial Musings of The Null Mind
Antique dental phantom,
microphone, amplified speaker,
truss, electronics
Dimensions variable
2024

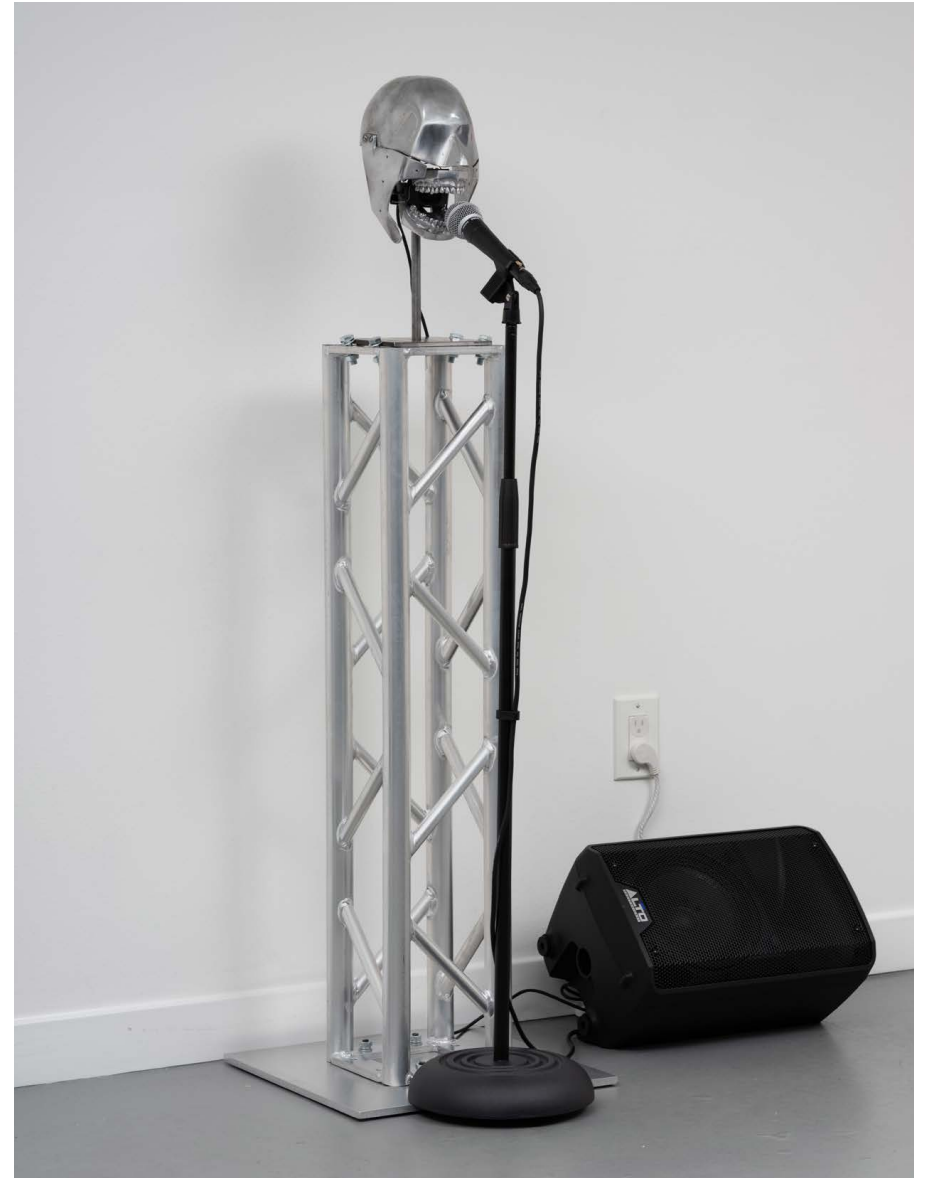


ALEXANDER REBEN

WRITE A CONVOLUTED EXHIBITION TITLE FOR ALEXANDER REBEN'S
SHOW IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY

Artificial Musings of The Null Mind (2024)

1. An AI generates idle thoughts
2. The thoughts are fed into a second AI trained to replicate the artist's voice
3. Thousands of thoughts spoken in the artist's voice are then scrambled and spoken through the sculpture



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SHOW IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY



ALEXANDER REBEN
WRITE A CONVOLUTED
EXHIBITION TITLE

Alexander Reben
Liminal Exchange
Plastic bucket, cotton pigment
print, aluminum label holder
Dimensions variable
Edition of 5 and 2 APs
2024



ALEXANDER REBEN
WRITE A CONVOLUTED
EXHIBITION TITLE

Svetlana Bucketović

Serbian

Liminal Exchange 2024

Commercial polypropylene receptacle

In this compelling meditation on late-stage capitalism and the performative nature of commodity exchange, the artist subverts the utilitarian archetype of the mass-produced vessel, transmuting the mundane into the extraordinary through strategic decontextualization. The Home Depot bucket, suspended in a state of perpetual potential energy, becomes a charged site of democratic participation and collective meaning-making.

Through its deliberate positioning in negative space, the work creates a phenomenological tension between utility and aesthetic contemplation, while its distinctive “safety orange” hue serves as a chromatic intervention that destabilizes institutional whiteness. As viewers engage in the ritualistic act of deposit and withdrawal, they become active participants in an evolving social sculpture that interrogates notions of ownership, value, and the gift economy.

The piece's participatory element—wherein visitors are invited to both contribute to and extract from its contents—manifests as a living critique of conventional museum paradigms of preservation and untouchability. This continuous flux of objects creates an ever-evolving archive of human intention and exchange, challenging traditional modes of artistic authorship and institutional authority.

Note: Visitors are encouraged to participate in the work by leaving or taking items from the bucket. Please refrain from depositing perishable or hazardous materials.

Liminal Exchange (2024)

1. The artist creates a sculpture from found materials
2. A photo is taken of the sculpture and given to AI, which makes a wall label for it

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SHOW IN THE BASEMENT OF THE CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY

Alexander Reben

*A Short History of Plungers and Other
Things That Go Plunge in the Night*

Plungers, cotton pigment print,
aluminum label holder

Dimensions variable

Edition of 5 and 2 APs

2020



ALEXANDER REBEN
WRITE A CONVOLUTED
EXHIBITION TITLE

A Short History of Plungers and Other Things That Go Plunge in the Night (2020)

1. AI generates a wall label for a fictitious artwork
2. The artist produces the artwork in real life based on the wall label

“The Plungers”

Unknown

A Short History of Plungers and Other Things That Go Plunge in the Night 1973
Plungers

The sculpture contains a plunger, a toilet plunger, a plunger, a plunger, a plunger, and a plunger, each of which has been modified. The first plunger is simply a normal plunger, but the rest represent a series of plungers with more and more of the handle removed until just the rubber cup is left. The title of the artwork is “A Short History of Plungers and Other Things That Go Plunge in the Night” by the artists known as “The Plungers” (whose identity remains unknown) and it was first exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in 1973.

“The Plungers”, were a collective of anonymous artists, founded in 1972. They were dedicated to the “conceptualization and promotion of a new art form called Plungism.” Plungism was a creative interpretation of the idea of Plungerism, which was defined by The Plungers as “a state of mind wherein the mind of an artist is in a state of flux and able to be influenced by all things, even plungers.” The Plungers' works were displayed in New York galleries and included such titles as “Plunger's Progress,” “The Plungers,” “The Plungers Strike Back,” and “Big Plunger 4: The Final Plunger,” all of which featured plungers, and “Plungers on Parade,” which showed images of plungers in public spaces. The Plungers disappeared and left no trace of their identity. The Plungers' works were collected by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. This sculpture was purchased by MoMA for \$200 and is now one of the most popular and recognizable pieces in its collection. This sculpture is also significant because it is the only piece of art by The Plungers that is still in existence.

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Alexander Reben
Deeply Artificial Trees
Video file
Edition of 5 and 2 APs
2017

Deeply Artificial Trees (2017)

1. Videos of a certain TV painter are fed through the "Deep Dream" AI system which amplifies patterns of shapes which are not there
2. Sounds from the TV show are learned by a second AI and are reproduced without structure
3. The resulting videos and sounds are edited into a video



This work is not endorsed, supported or recommended by Bob Ross Inc.

ALEXANDER REBEN
WRITE A CONVOLUTED
EXHIBITION TITLE

Alexander Reben
The Absence of Presence
Cotton pigment print, aluminum label holder
8 1/2 x 6 3/8 inches
2023

Alexander Reben

American

The Absence of Presence: A Commentary on Non-Space
2023

Absence, light, space, and wall

In “The Absence of Presence: A Commentary on Non-Space,” Alexander Reben masterfully employs the lexicon of non-materiality to provoke a dialogue with existential conundrums and ontological anxieties. In what might be considered an audacious defiance against the tangibility of art, the artist presents us with an empty wall—an unadorned stretch of white space that becomes both the canvas and the artwork. Reben’s anti-composition engages with the aesthetics of negation and the politics of invisibility. His use of “Absence” as a medium in itself is an eloquent rebuff to our consumerist preoccupation with “more.” The wall, in its unadulterated emptiness, becomes a performative act of resistance against the commodification of art, challenging the spectator’s gaze to linger on the unseen and the unseeable.

Drawing upon the lineage of conceptual artists who dared to question the intrinsic value of matter, Reben invites us into an intellectual labyrinth, wherein the absence of art becomes art itself—a complex meta-textual layering that explores the boundaries of perception and meaning.

The wall, lit merely by the ambient illumination, becomes a porous membrane absorbing the emotional and intellectual projections of the viewer. In this void, we confront not just the absence of art, but perhaps, the art of absence. As we stand before this non-object, we are compelled to examine the vacuities within our own lives, the unseen dimensions of our existence, and the socio-cultural constructions that delineate what we perceive as “real.” “The Absence of Presence” offers no easy conclusions. Instead, it exists as a poignant query, a blank page upon which each viewer might inscribe their own ineffable sense of wonder or unease. It challenges us to reconsider the nature of art, and perhaps more boldly, the art of being.