

IN PRAISE OF COLORED MUD

HOW WE CONSUME IMAGERY HAS BEEN
RADICALLY TRANSFORMED BY DIGITAL
MEDIA OVER THE LAST TWENTY YEARS, AND
IT IS ABOUT TO CHANGE EVEN FURTHER
WITH THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.

There has been a lot of hand-wringing in the beleaguered art industry regarding the impact of artificial intelligence on picture-making. Its effect on the applied arts is already apparent, with AI generated photographs, special effects, and graphics. These are all for the most part presented and viewed on a backlit screen. Even paintings, which are flat but physical objects with surface characteristics, are mostly viewed as photographs on a screen. True viewing of paintings happens under reflected light. The paint contains ground pigments, made of earth or synthetic materials, that have inherent qualities that change under UV light. Suspended in mediums such as acrylic polymers, linseed oils, petroleum distillates, alkyds, or varnishes derived from pine resin, one sees light refracted through paint layers in varying degrees of opacity and transparency, giving the painting different moods in different lighting conditions.

“A neurological study commissioned by the Mauritshuis Museum in The Hague, the Netherlands, found that viewing artworks in person elicited an emotional response 10 times stronger than viewing those same works in reproduction.”^[1]

A painting made in 2025 has as much direct lineage to a painting made from ground earth and animal fat in a Paleolithic cave, than it does to an AI-generated image. For this reason, I am not fearful of AI “taking my job”, unless it is a robot doing the painting, and

- By Daina Higgins

we all know how good those paintings are. In fact, I believe that AI has the ability to once more liberate painting the way the invention of photography

did. The question is, how will we bring painting to audiences who are home-bound and screen dependent? Perhaps that is a socio-political issue that needs to be resolved in order for painting to survive. And in order for it to survive, we need to advocate for the benefits of material richness in the everyday lives of people. Creating and sharing art is becoming a political act. I am all for deprofessionalizing art, and bringing art back to accessible spaces- the café, the street, the classroom. Only in this way, will art survive our techno-feudal age.

You can see Daina Higgins’ paintings in *Belonging: The Long Island City Studio Collective*. An exhibition featuring the work of the fourteen painters who form the New York collective. The exhibition will be on view at Contemporary Art Matters, 243 N 5th Street, Columbus, OH location, April 10- May 30th, 2025.

Visit dainahiggins.com for more information.

[1] <https://hyperallergic.com/955892/original-art-stimulates-the-brain-more-than-reproductions-study-finds/#:~:text=A%20neurological%20study%20commissioned%20by,those%20same%20works%20in%20reproduction.>

Daina Higgins Studio
proudly presents

Growing Up Graffiti

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for info
dainahiggins.com

