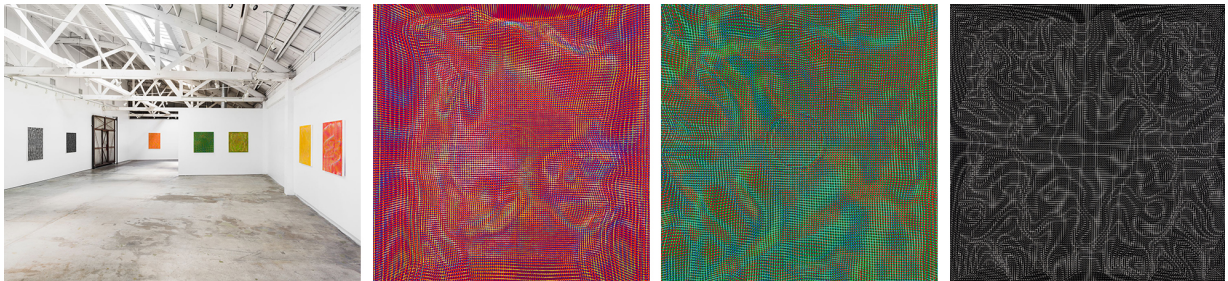Art Now L.A.
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Candace Thatcher: 'Scroll Interference'
Referencing the Tangible, Yet the Unknown
The Landing
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by Jody Zellen

An algorithm is defined as a set of rules that are followed in calculations or problem- solving operations, more often than not using a computer. Yet, there are also many artists (working in both analogue and digital formats) who create their pieces based on algorithms that rely on a set of "rules" or instructions. An example of an analogue artist working this way is the Conceptual Minimalist Sol LeWitt, whose wall and paper drawings were often made by others following a set of precise instructions. How artists use computers and code and the different ways instructions can be created and followed has been the subject of numerous exhibitions. These ideas were explored most recently in *Coded Art Enters the Computer Age 1952 -1982,* an exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (on view from February 12 – July 2, 2023). Except for the fact that they were created after 1982, Nevada City- based Candace Thatcher's paintings could have fit within the premise of that exhibition.

In her exhibition *Scroll Interference,* Thatcher presents recent paintings from her *Archive Scan* series. At first glance, these acrylic on panel works appear to be complex geometric abstractions that share a kinship with Josef Albers, as well as the Op Art patterned paintings of Victor Vasarely and with digital artist Casey Reas' recent homages to Vasarely — *METAVASARELY* and *An Empty Room* — (both 2023 and presented online by LACMA as part of the *Coded* exhibition). These mesmerizing pieces follow a programmed sequence based on Vasarely's works that generate an infinite array of visual patterns.

Thatcher's works are process-based and labor intensive as she follows a specific sequence of steps to transform found digital images into abstract paintings. Using the program "Processing" (coincidently developed by Reas), she translates the pixels into topographical lattices which are then output as vinyl screens used as stencils to create complex multi-layered paintings. The layering of the different lattices suggests an illusion of depth in these multi colored and dimensional works.

What is striking about Thatcher's *Archive Scan* pieces (2022-2023), is how they read as abstractions rather than translations of actual photographs. As completed paintings, there are no obvious referents to an image, only to screens or distorted grids in various colors that are layered on the surface to create intricate *moire*patterns. *Archive Scan XXI, (*2022) is a 36 x 36- inch acrylic on panel work in which hues of reds, oranges and blues oscillate across the composition creating depth on the flat surface. While the majority of the pieces are in color, Thatcher also presents a handful of paintings that are simply black and white. Looking closely at *Archive Scan XXXIX* (2023) reveals an all-over, but not repeating pattern comprised of short

and long white lines on a black ground that undulate throughout the composition. Another black and white work, *Archive Scan XXX* (2023) appears to be a pattern of overlapping squares that form a gridded moire. The blue-green hued *Archive Scan XXIII* (2022) has the tonalities of highly saturated camouflage: that pattern conflicts with a subtle circular shape in the center of the image.

Thatcher's abstractions are absorbing and perplexing. They are difficult to decipher, perhaps because they are computer generated, yet created by hand. The pieces allude to topographical maps, moire patterns and layered window screens, and while they are completely devoid of imagery, they resonate with a power and depth that references something tangible, yet also unknown.

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