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MATTHEW
PLUMMER-FERNANDEZ
7TH NOV - 23RD DEC, 2015

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A look at Matthew Plummer-Fernandez's new sculptures has me wondering what might have happened if it were revealed that Rorschach were a lepidopterist at the time he was administering inkblot tests. Every shape seems to be contorted to the very precipice of an unrecognizable state. Any additional pixelation or pinching would subject the forms to the myriad possibilities of the viewer's imagination.

Long fascinated by the resilience of Mickey Mouse's shape — twist, stretch, twinge, or squeeze, there's no puzzling over the wheel-like ears — Plummer-Fernandez's new series expands on his ideas about illusory images, material, and copyright to include a new cast of familiar faces.

SpongeBob SquarePants, Goku, Marge Simpson. Even if you haven't watched the cartoons that they come from, you have seen them on coffee mugs, cereal boxes, cell phone cases, on greeting cards and novelty valentines. They may float in the form of puffed up foil birthday balloons, as stuffed toys you might win after dunking a clown with a water gun at the county fair, as a tiled image repeating in the squares of a quilt on a child's bed. Every example, every physical form these characters take outside of the flat drawn enclosed world of cartoons, represents a transaction, the licensing fee a merchant pays to the copyright holder.

Plummer-Fernandez's series of sculptures is shown with corresponding prints that were made with a script he wrote to convert 3D model files into png images. The pixel colors represent coordinate geometry. The images might look like Magic Eye optical illusions but the dimensions cannot be seen by the human eye. Only when decoded will the images reveal themselves as Mickey Mouse, Goku, Marge Simpson, and SpongeBob.

It turns out that SpongeBob is a popular image on file-sharing sites. The artist wonders if the cartoon character might be to this generation what Mickey Mouse was to the past. Most people under a certain age will think of Mickey Mouse as a brand logo rather than a childhood memory.

It is as remote to us as it is familiar. Every time it nears entry into the public domain, Disney, the world's second largest media conglomerate after Comcast, foils it. They lobby and win a copyright extension. Meanwhile, the company shields its most famous character from the world like Rapunzel. It appears on toys, of course, and pretentious, still chintzy objects: Swarovski Crystal ornaments, mock Fabergé eggs, as an option for an Apple Watch face. Mickey Mouse seems like a star from the past, like Marilyn Monroe or Clark Gable, rather than something that has ever coexisted with the internet and smart phones, or with any foot in the present. It is like a hologram version of itself.

Walt Disney chose a mouse because it was so commonplace. He saw them scurrying in the trash bins behind the studio where he would sketch. Contrast this with SpongeBob SquarePants series creator Stephen Hillenburg, a marine biologist, who was reportedly inspired to draw the weirdest creature he could think of — a sea sponge. In Plummer-Fernandez's sculpture, it has raised arms reminiscent of a shruggie emoticon, its familiar surface firm rather than squeezable. SpongeBob's dopey face is gone and instead the craterous texture circles around a hollow opening reminiscent of Edvard Munch's *The Scream*.

In this series, Marge Simpson is abstracted into what looks like a fertility totem from a cult from some far off galaxy. Goku, the Dragon Ball protagonist, looks like an inverted zoetrope depicting his signature power move. Returning to Mickey Mouse, here he looks like a Hindu god with a pearlescent purple sheen. Its cold iridescence shines with all the possibilities that the Walt Disney Company doesn't understand.

Mickey Mouse looks liberated. Like Plummer-Fernandez introduced him to a new dream world. He looks like a prism might, if prisms dispersed internet instead of light.

Joanne McNeil

A R T W O R K S

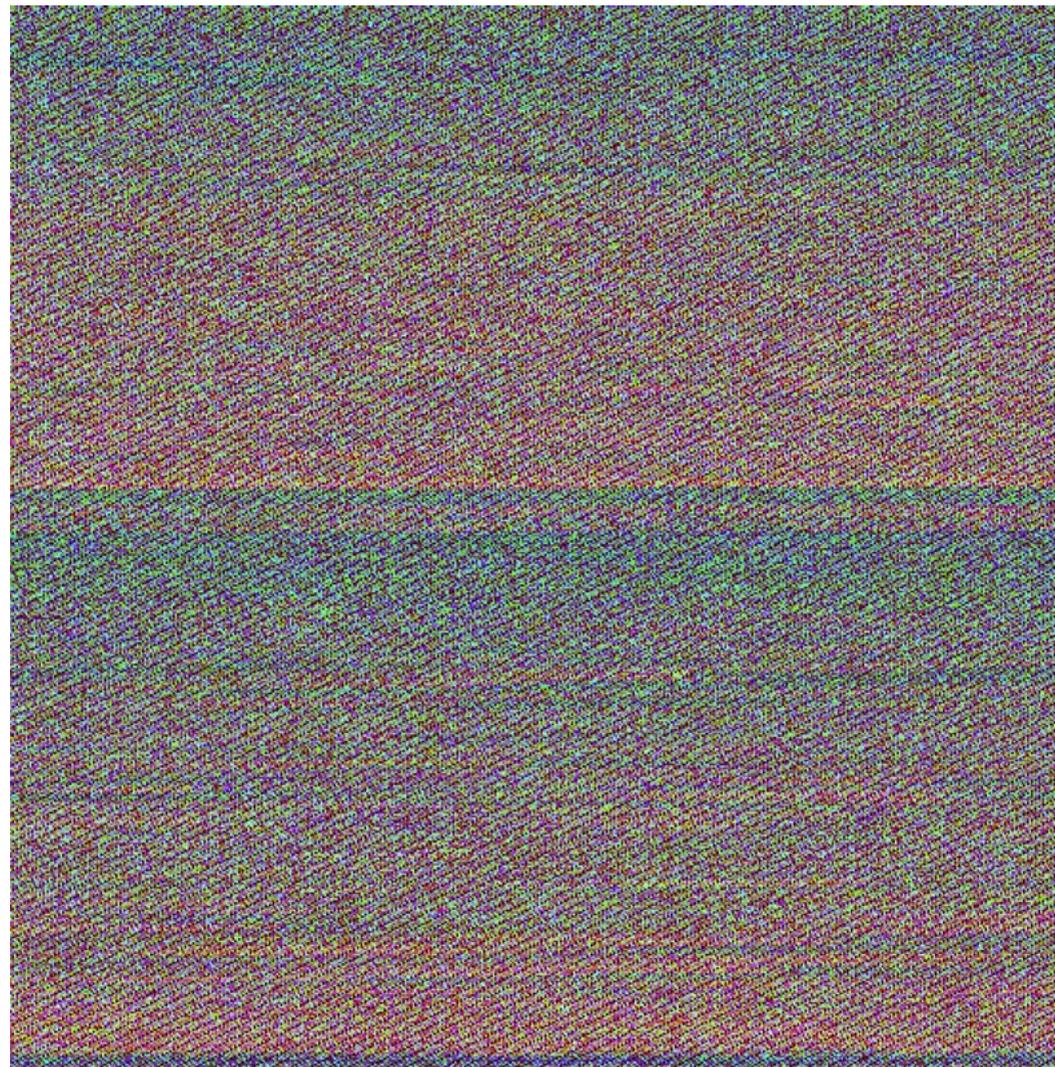
EVERY MICKEY, 2015

Matthew Plummer-Fernandez
SLS polyamide, resin, paint, 50 x 24 x 50 cm
Edition of 3



EVERY_MICKEY.PNG, 2015

Matthew Plummer-Fernandez
Ditone archival pigment print, 100 x 100 cm



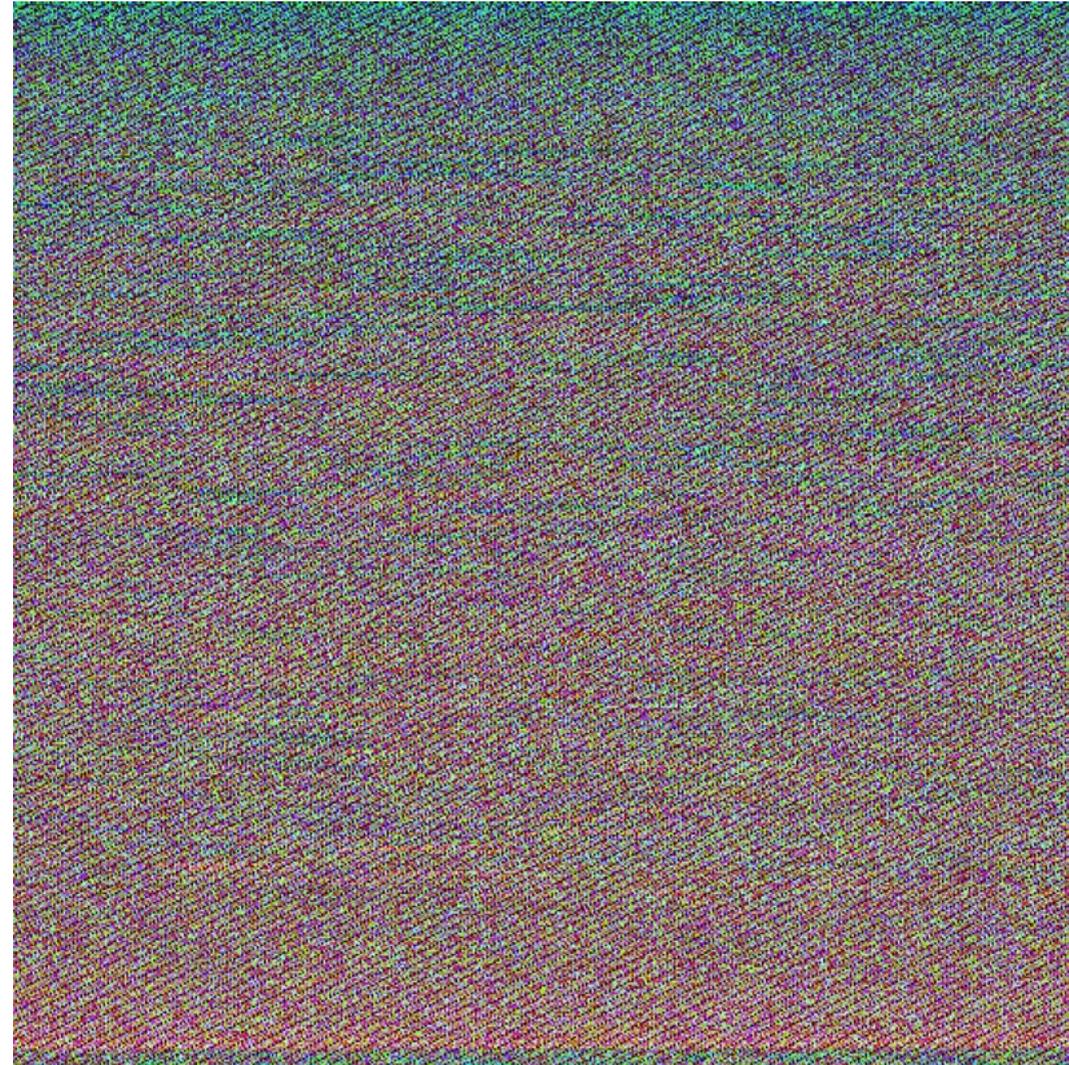
GOGOGOGOGOKU, 2015

Matthew Plummer-Fernandez
SLS polyamide, resin, paint, 47 x 48 x 33 cm
Edition of 3



GOGOGOGOKU.PNG, 2015

Matthew Plummer-Fernandez
Ditone archival pigment print, 100 x 100 cm



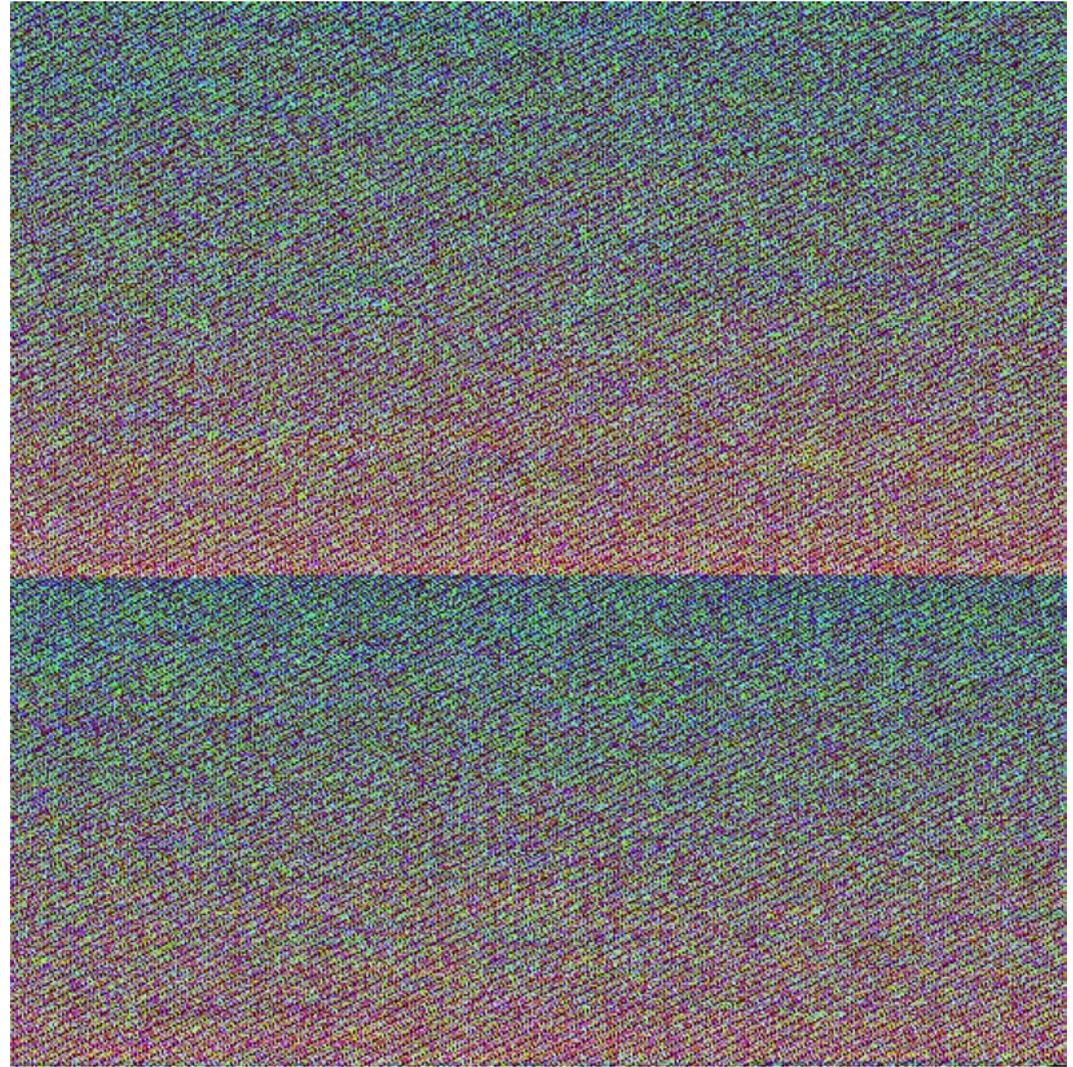
MERGE SIMPSON, 2015

Matthew Plummer-Fernandez
SLS polyamide, resin, paint, 41 x 22 x 55 cm
Edition of 3



MERGE_SIMPSON.PNG, 2015

Matthew Plummer-Fernandez
Ditone archival pigment print, 100 x 100 cm



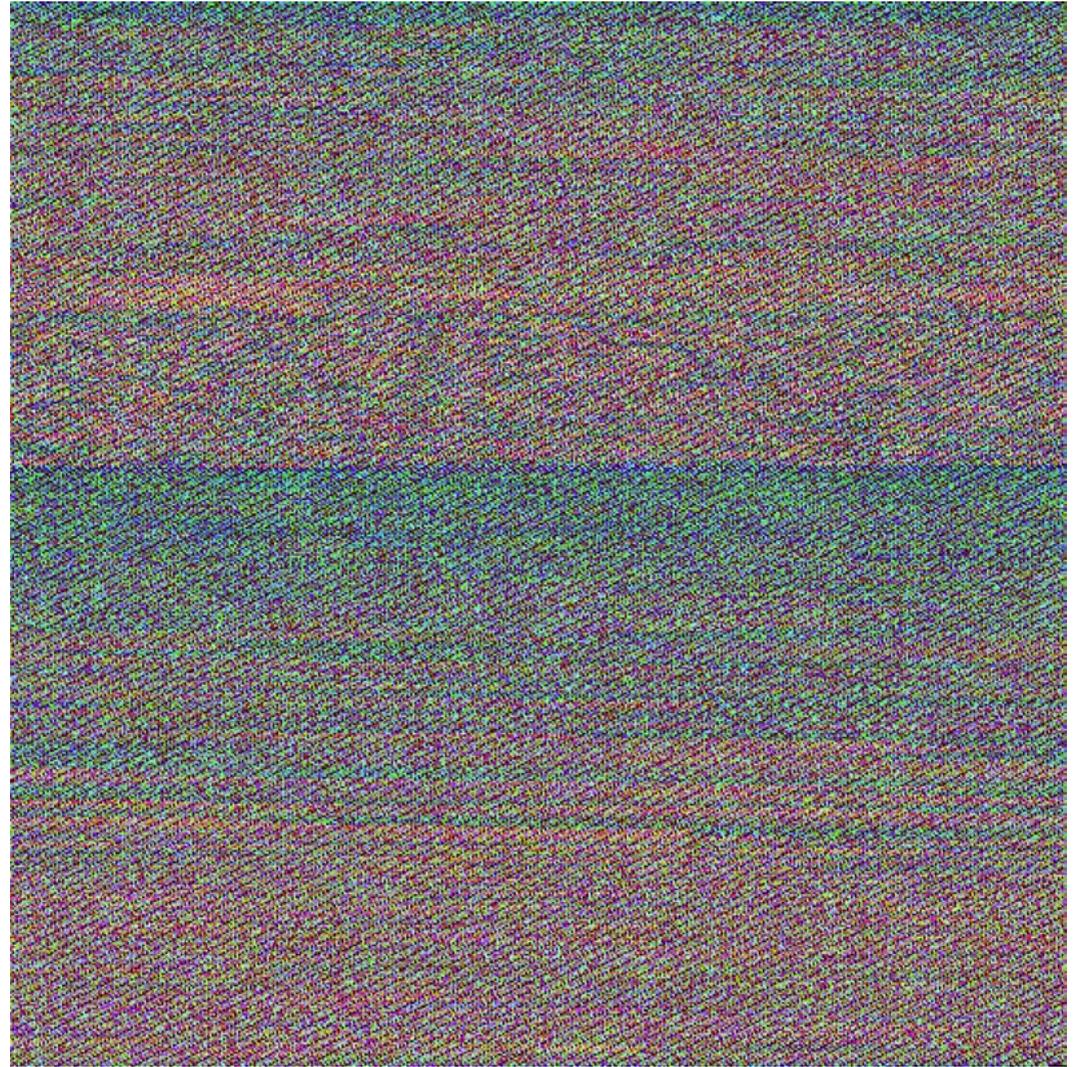
SPONGEBOOL, 2015

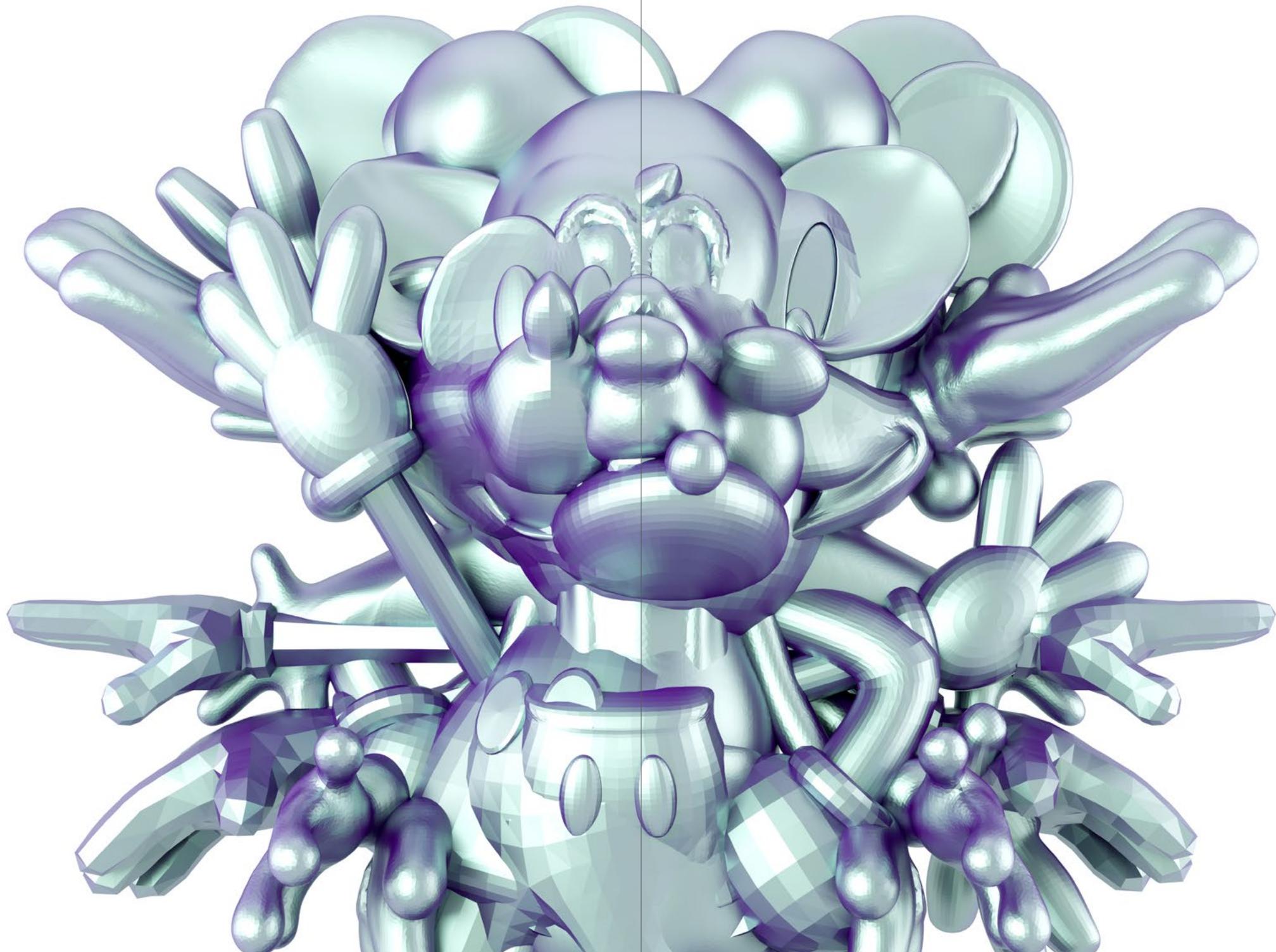
Matthew Plummer-Fernandez
SLS polyamide, resin, paint, 47 x 13 x 40 cm
Edition of 3

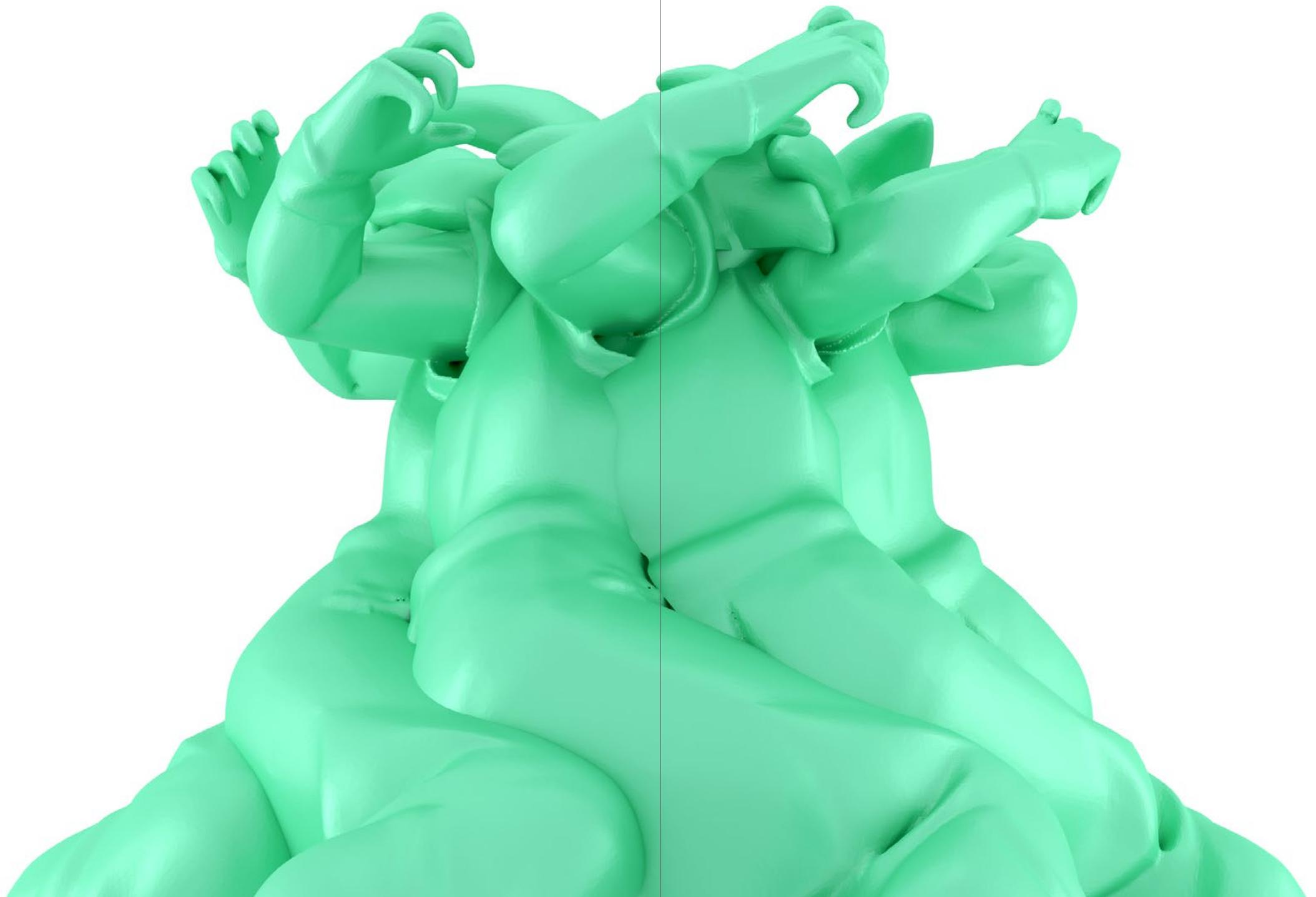


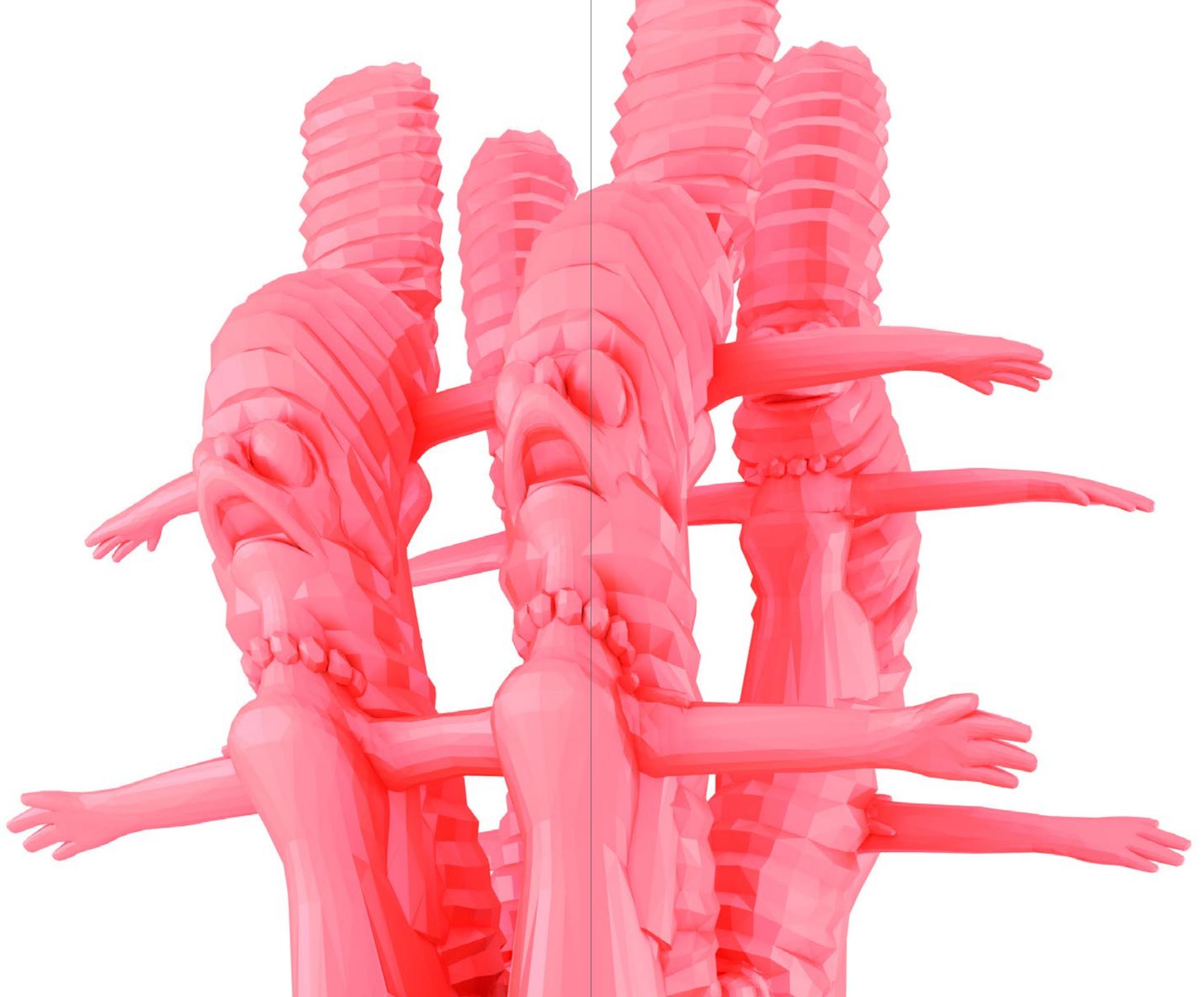
SPONGEBOOL.PNG, 2015

Matthew Plummer-Fernandez
Ditone archival pigment print, 100 x 100 cm

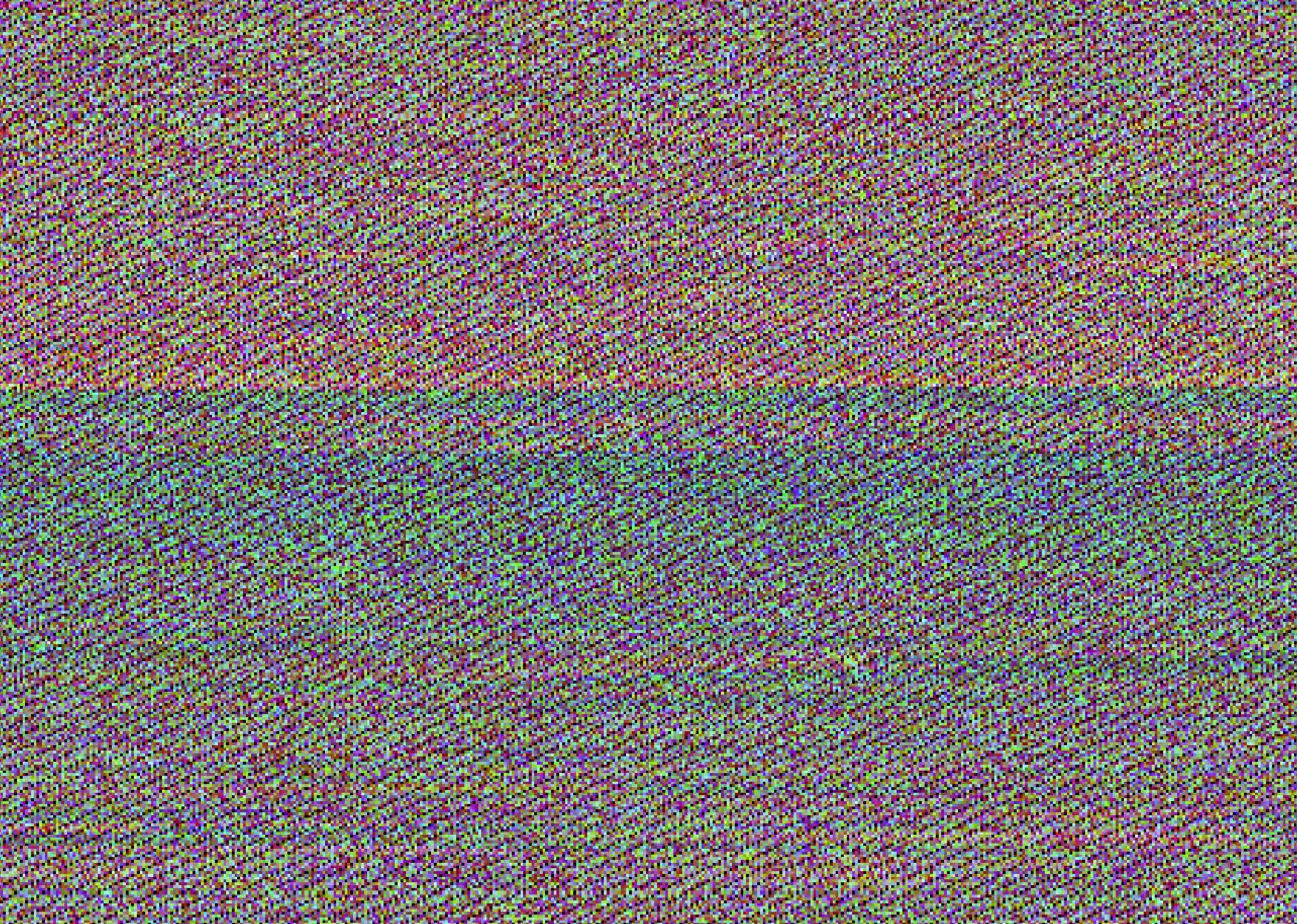


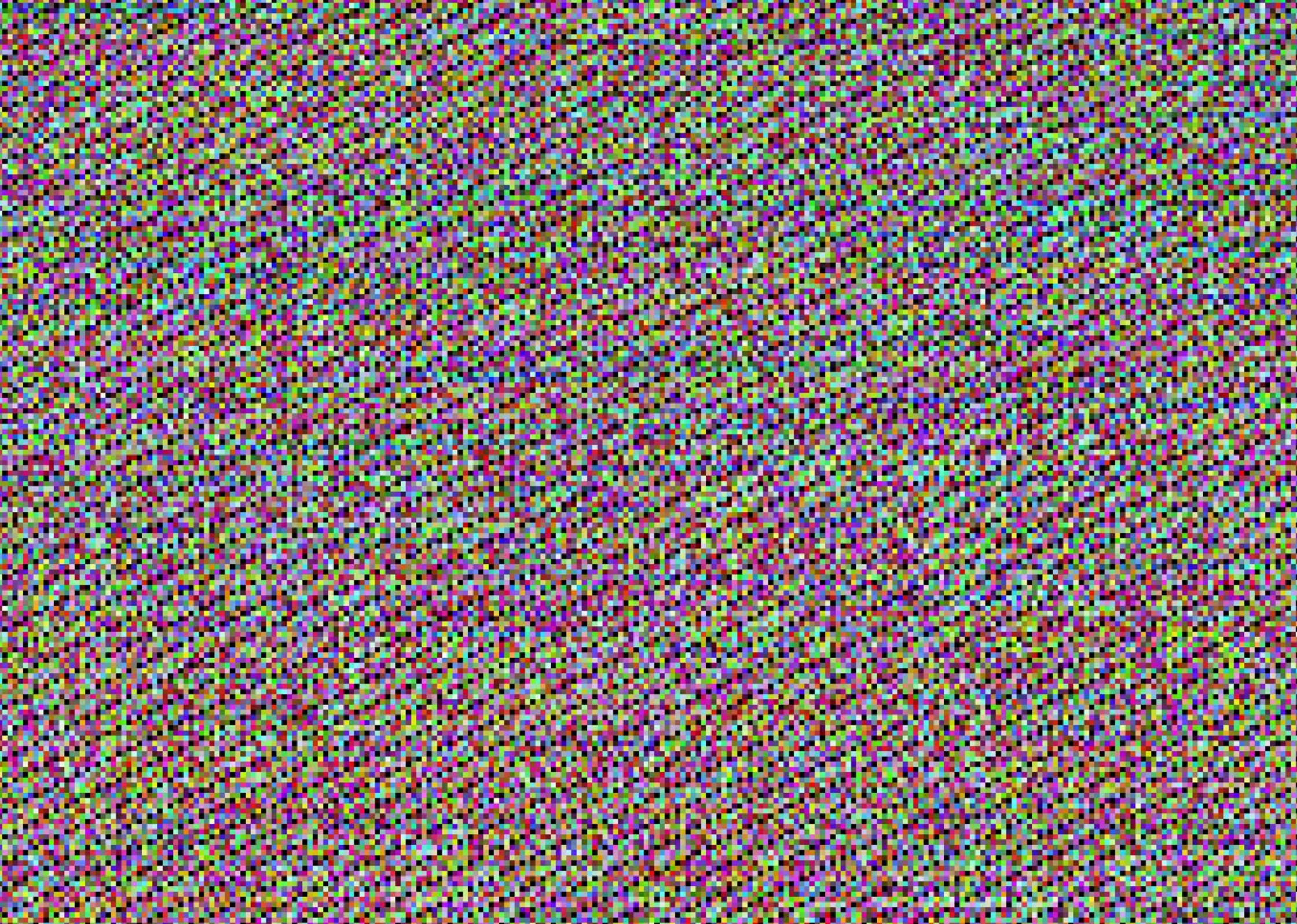


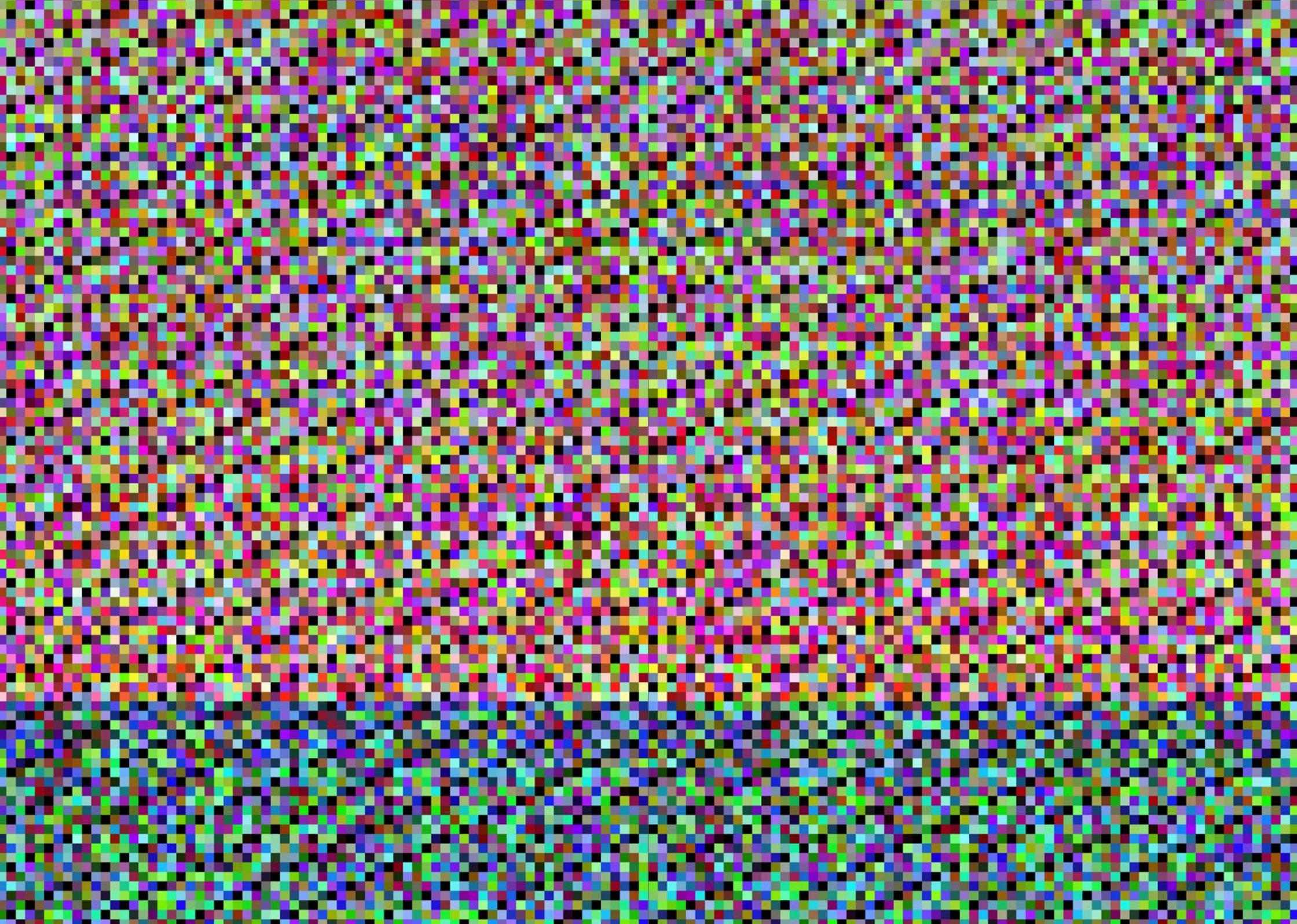


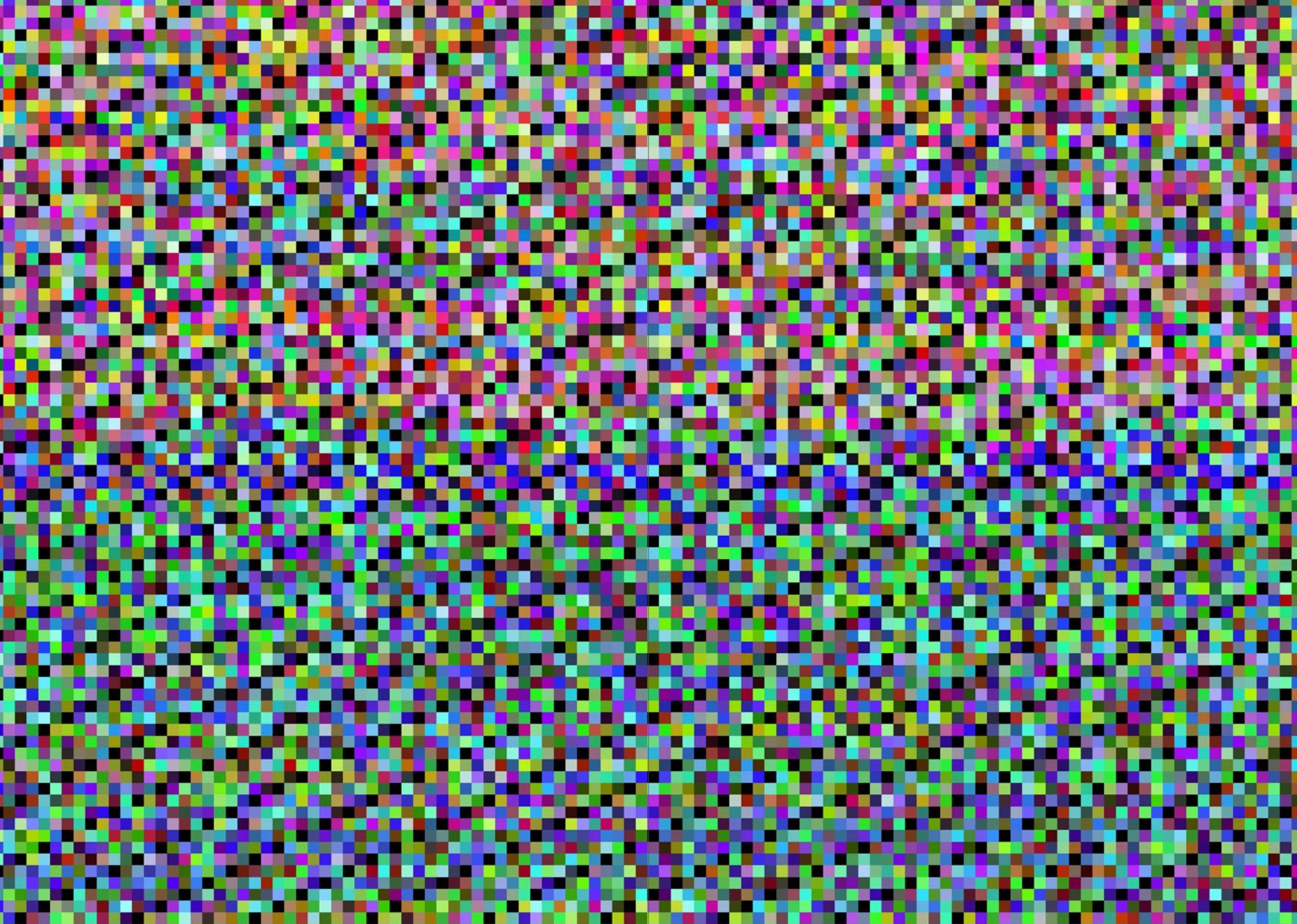












MATTHEW PLUMMER-FERNANDEZ

Currently based in London, British Colombian artist and researcher Matthew Plummer-Fernandez produces altered data files and distorted 3D printed objects as “remixed” abstract artworks of geometric beauty. Customized software, replicability and generative techniques are the focus of his explorations of the automated systems operating within digital culture and the physical world. His artistic practice embraces the serendipity of digital glitch, both as a playful reinterpretation of imperfection as an aesthetic value and as a means of examining issues regarding the use of free software applications and copyright protected objects.

Plummer-Fernandez has developed his investigations of how advances in digital technology transform our relationships with everyday objects through projects such as the *Digital Natives* sculpture series (2012), and *Disarming Corruptor*, a free software application that corrupts and encrypts 3D files beyond recognition. The application allows authorized users to reverse the process, to subsequently reveal and share the file’s original nature. Honored with the Award of Distinction at Ars Electronica 2014, the application has provoked a compelling critical debate on file sharing censorship and intellectual property claims, especially with regard to 3D printing and the sharing of illegal items.

Plummer-Fernandez is also the creator of *Novice Art Blogger*, a tumblr bot based on deep learning algorithms developed by scientists at the University of Toronto for analyzing and reviewing art. Launched in January 2015, the project now has over 10,000 followers and has become the starting point for a practice based PhD funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council at Goldsmiths, University of London, where he has worked as a research assistant and visiting tutor.

His work has been commissioned by Rhizome, Arts Co, It’s Nice That, and Selfridges. He has shown in galleries and museums worldwide, including the Musée d’Art Contemporain de Montréal; Onassis Cultural Centre, Athens; Cyberarts / Ars Electronica, Linz; The Barbican, London; and Brighton Digital, Brighton.



A project by **Matthew Plummer-Fernandez**

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