

## The Unseen Threads

Anikoon · Artica · Paul Choate · Adam Umbach

May 15 – 21, 2025

Reception: Friday, May 16, 6-8 pm

Text | Brett Lee, Curator

Jakupsil is pleased to present *The Unseen Threads*, a group exhibition featuring recent works by Anikoon, Artica, Paul Choate, and Adam Umbach. Through painting, sculpture, and drawing, the exhibition excavates invisible systems—technological, emotional, architectural, and mnemonic—that structure both internal lives and external realities. The title alludes to interconnected threads running through diverse practices: Choate's machine-assisted drawings interrogate human creativity within technological automation; Artica's paintings map tension between organic impulse and architectural constraint; Anikoon's robots embody psychological narratives beneath social masks; and Umbach's meticulous objects transform personal memory into shared experience. Within a cultural landscape defined by artificial intelligence and algorithmic mediation, the works engage systematic structures as sites of inquiry, examining what remains human in an increasingly mechanized world. *The Unseen Threads* points to what resists visibility yet exerts force: memories shaped in silence, algorithms operating below awareness, emotional states masked in performance, and societal structures woven into daily life. Rather than centering the machine as object, the exhibition approaches the mechanical as metaphor, mirror, and framework through which subjectivity is constructed.

### System Mapping: From Digital Automation to Cognitive Cartographies

The exhibition presents a dialogue between four distinct artistic practices that reveal conceptual resonance despite visual diversity. Paul Choate navigates between manual craft and technological automation, probing how advancement reshapes creative expression. His practice examines how personifying technology reflects human absurdities and existential concerns. Working with AI assistance and robotics, Choate seeks not to replace artistic intent but to enhance it through human-machine fusion. His approach acknowledges the challenges of producing tangible art through technological means while critiquing humanity's tendency to overcomplicate reality. By positioning the machine as interlocutor rather than mere tool, his works offer insight into what remains irreducibly human within automated creative systems—a visual dialogue between artistic intention and algorithmic execution.

Artica's painterly and sculptural explorations function as a mapping of the mechanistic frameworks governing contemporary existence. As Nam June Paik uttered, "*Cybernetics is the exploration of boundary regions between and across various existing sciences... I want to shape the sensory space around us.*"<sup>1</sup> Artica's work traverses boundaries between scientific precision and urban entropy, drawing from cellular morphology and metropolitan architecture. Influenced by microscopic structures and macroscopic urban chaos, she merges empirical observation with gestural marks. *The Fly* and *Signal Interference* combine painting with found materials—magnets, circuitry, conductors—creating spatial metaphors for cognitive processes. Her paintings explore transitional zones—threshold spaces we move through rather than inhabit—revealing correlations between architectural structures and neural architectures. Through light and electricity, her work renders thought visible: kinetic, resistant, alive within containing structures.

### Vulnerable Machines

Anikoon's distinctive robot figures eschew the sleek aesthetic often associated with robotic representation to instead embody human vulnerability. Carl Jung observed, "*The persona is that which in reality one is not, but which oneself as well as others think one is.*"<sup>2</sup> This insight resonates through Anikoon's practice, where robots function as the masks we all wear—externalizations of the personae adopted in modern life. Originating from a chance encounter with an abandoned toy robot at a New York flea market, his series explores the impermanence inherent in both consumer goods and human emotions. Through expressions ranging from

playful bewilderment to profound melancholy in series like *Rusty Robot* and *Heart to Heart*, Anikoon visualizes the gap between external appearance and internal voice. His exploration reveals a core element running throughout his work: an interplay between cartoon-like imagination and longing for innocence, coupled with the recognition that such purity remains elusive. His work draws on Levinas' concept of *face-to-face encounter* as a site of ethical recognition, suggesting that accepting others as they are ultimately leads to self-realization and genuine connection emerges when we perceive the vulnerability behind technological facades.

### Memory Engines: Object as Archive

Adam Umbach's practice operates at the intersection of personal mythology and collective nostalgia, employing meticulous technique to transform ordinary objects into vessels of emotional resonance. Benjamin noted, "*Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector's passion borders on the chaos of memories*"<sup>3</sup>—an insight illuminating Umbach's approach. His method—juxtaposing photorealistic rendering with gestural marks from his non-dominant hand—creates a formal dialectic mirroring the tension between structured recollection and unmediated emotion. Working in luminous color fields between abstraction and representation, Umbach constructs images functioning simultaneously as taxonomic specimens and animated presences, inviting viewers into spaces where memory becomes both archive and encounter. This transformation is evident in *Another Garden Scene #9*, where butterflies serve as tributes to his late mother's love of gardens, and in *Duck Light (Bright Blue)*, where a childhood toy assumes monumental presence through isolation and chromatic intensity. Umbach crafts memory machines—systems processing lived experience through visual representation that transform private nostalgia into shared territory where viewers' own memories find resonance.

### Systemic Threads and Self

The exhibition examines the dialectical relationship between systems and subjective experience, revealing how mechanical frameworks—technologies, social architectures, cognitive patterns, or representational conventions—both shape and are shaped by consciousness. The title references hidden connections: between technological production and artistic expression, between environments and thought processes, between mechanical representation and emotional states. In our era of technological acceleration and AI anxiety, Anikoon, Artica, Choate, and Umbach offer perspectives neither uncritically celebrating progress nor retreating into nostalgia. The works engage the machine as both subject and medium, exploring how mechanical systems reveal humanity through their otherness. *The Unseen Threads* invites contemplation of how meaning emerges at the intersection of consciousness and systems, offering inquiry into what constitutes humanity in an age defined by our relationship with the seen and unseen threads connecting us to technological, emotional, and social infrastructures.

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<sup>1</sup> Nam June Paik, *Global Groove 2004*, eds. Nam June Paik, Jon Ippolito and John G. Hanhardt (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2004), 107.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963), 415.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 486.

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Location: 30-43 31st Street, Astoria NY

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