

Pi-xels

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2013-2018

Abstract

Creating recognizable imagery by writing π from memory.

The performance of writing digits of π from memory to thousands of digits can be a lot like vertigo. So can the act of painting or drawing the same image for dozens or hundreds of hours. So to me, combining the two practices seemed absolutely natural from the start.

The mechanics of combining drawing with writing π from memory were less clear, although I eventually began to look more seriously at the possibility of using the written digits as pixels

In my first full-scale work — a portrait of Erwin Schrodinger [Figure 1] — I was unsure of the cognitive or temporal demands of the task, so I first processed the image using a variety of techniques and traced it onto the canvas, only afterwards writing π from memory.

Once I felt more confident in my ability to create representational imagery I began to create pi-xel art entirely by hand [Figure 2]. In different iterations I created recognizable content by varying the value of each pi-xel or the space between them.

I initially deemed this process to be too slow for painting, and it was only in 2017 that I created pi-xel paintings [Figure 3]. A subtlety in these works is that it is much easier to create precise forms by filling in the negative (background) of each cell [Figure 4]. In these experiments, reciting π becomes a formal typographic game in which color is a variable.

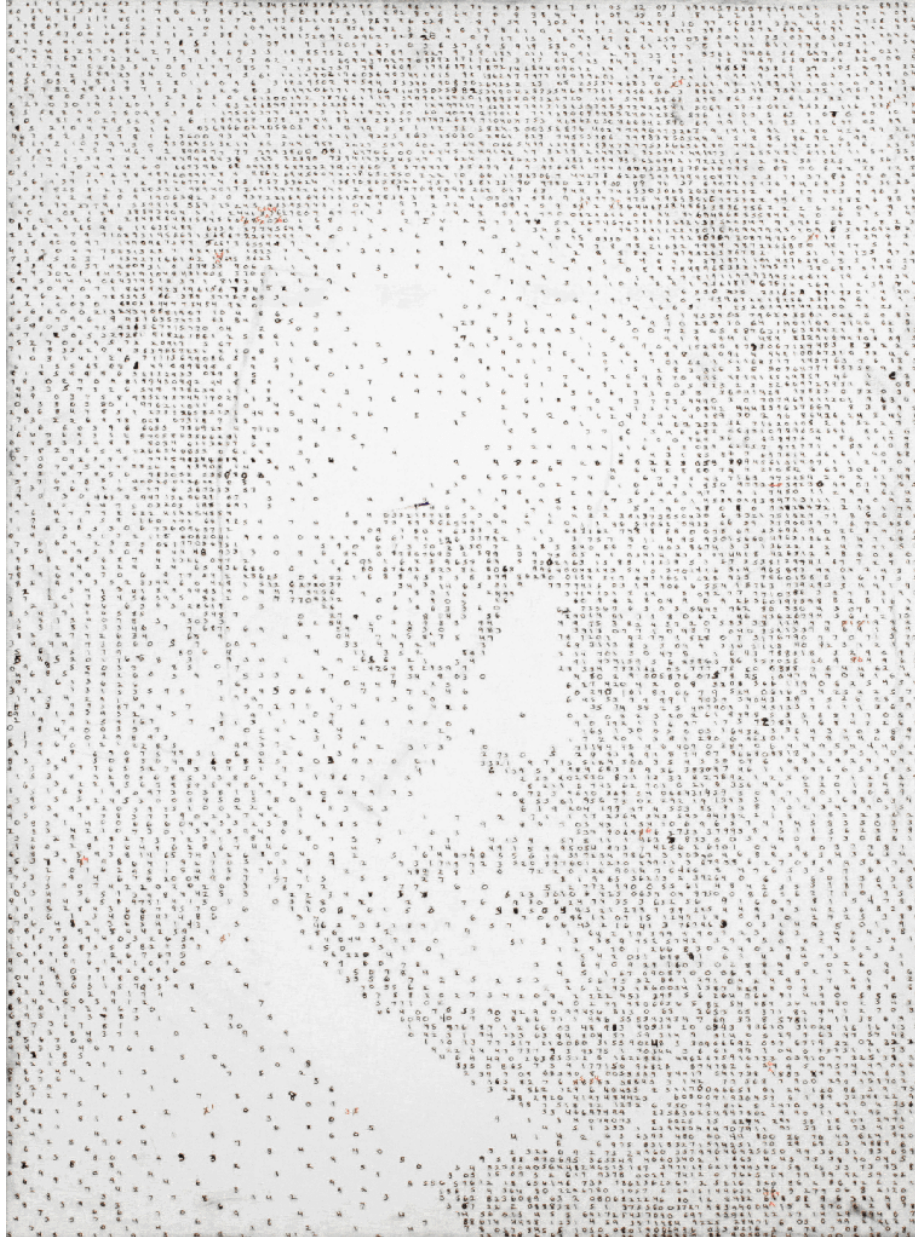


Figure 1: Erwin Schrodinger (traced) — π written from memory to 9,500 digits
— roller pen on acrylic-primed cotton canvas — 24" \times 32" — 2013

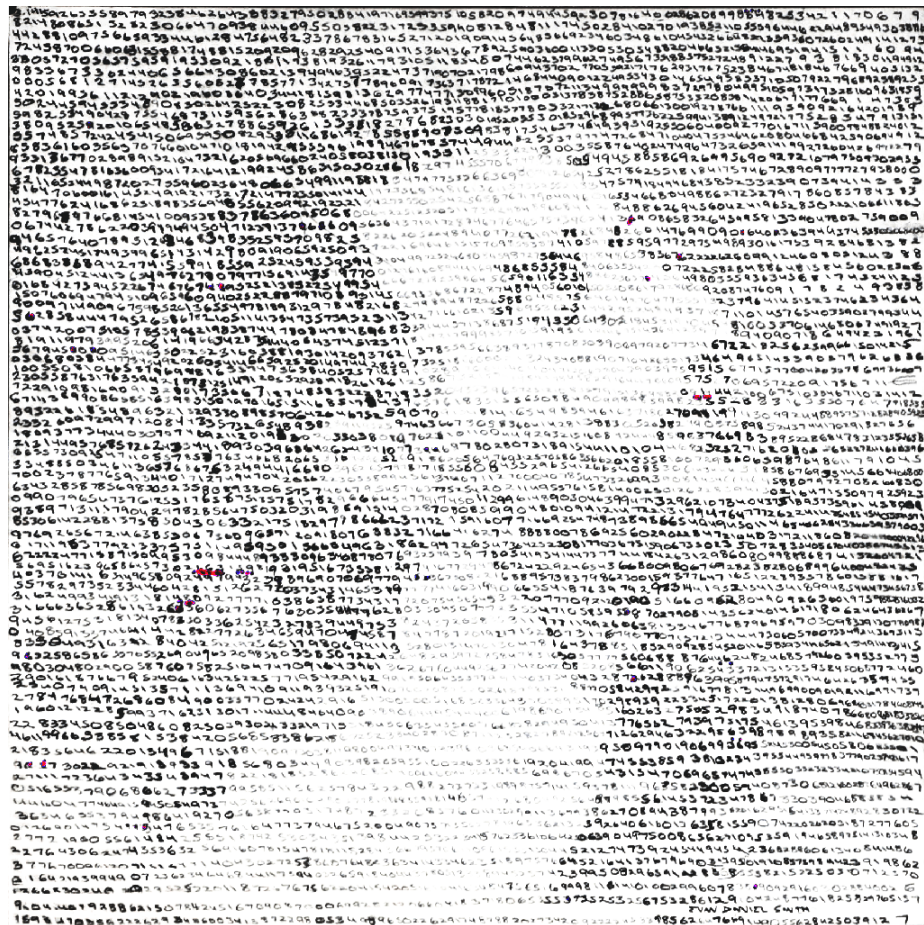


Figure 2: Freehand still from the movie $\pi - \pi$ written from memory to 8,000 digits — conte crayon on clayboard — 12" \times 12" — 2014

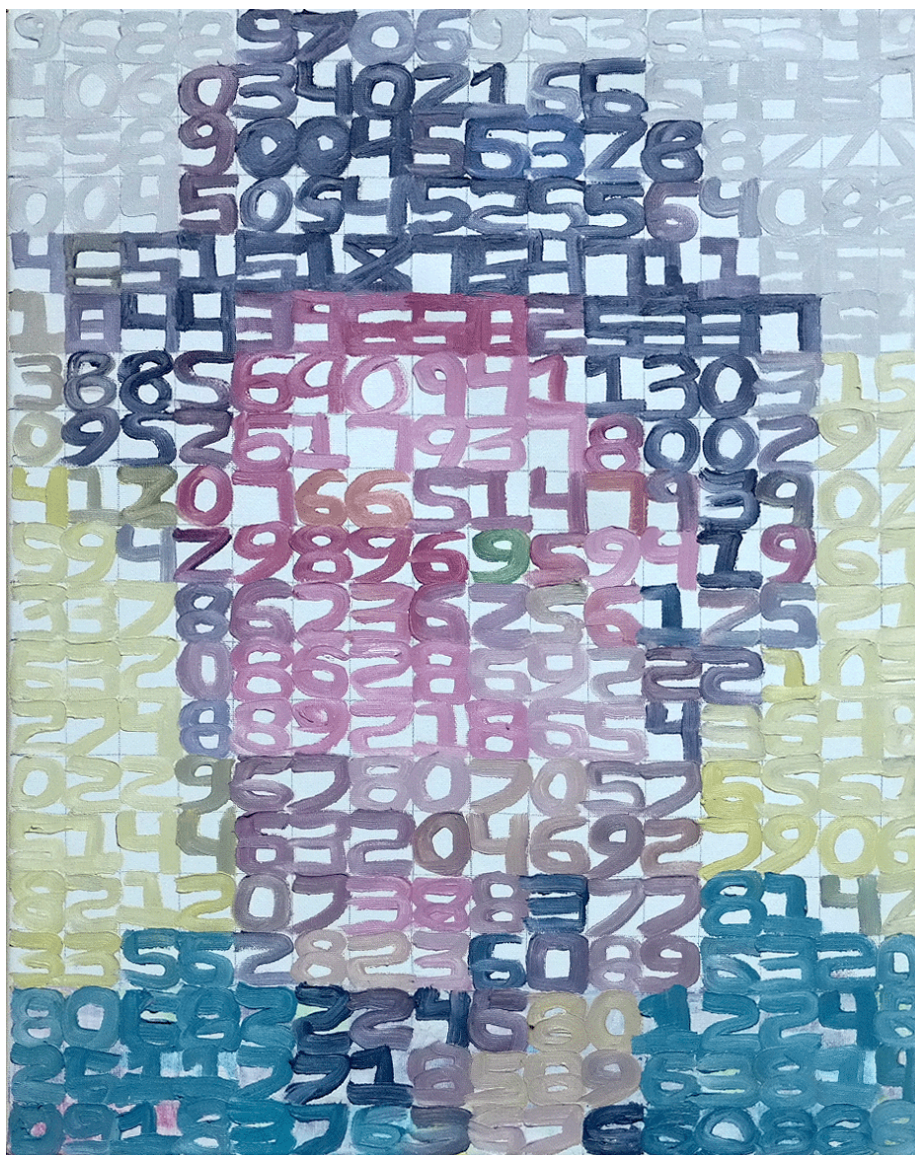


Figure 3: Self-portrait — digits 9,000-9,320 of π written from memory — oil on canvas — 16" \times 20" — 2018

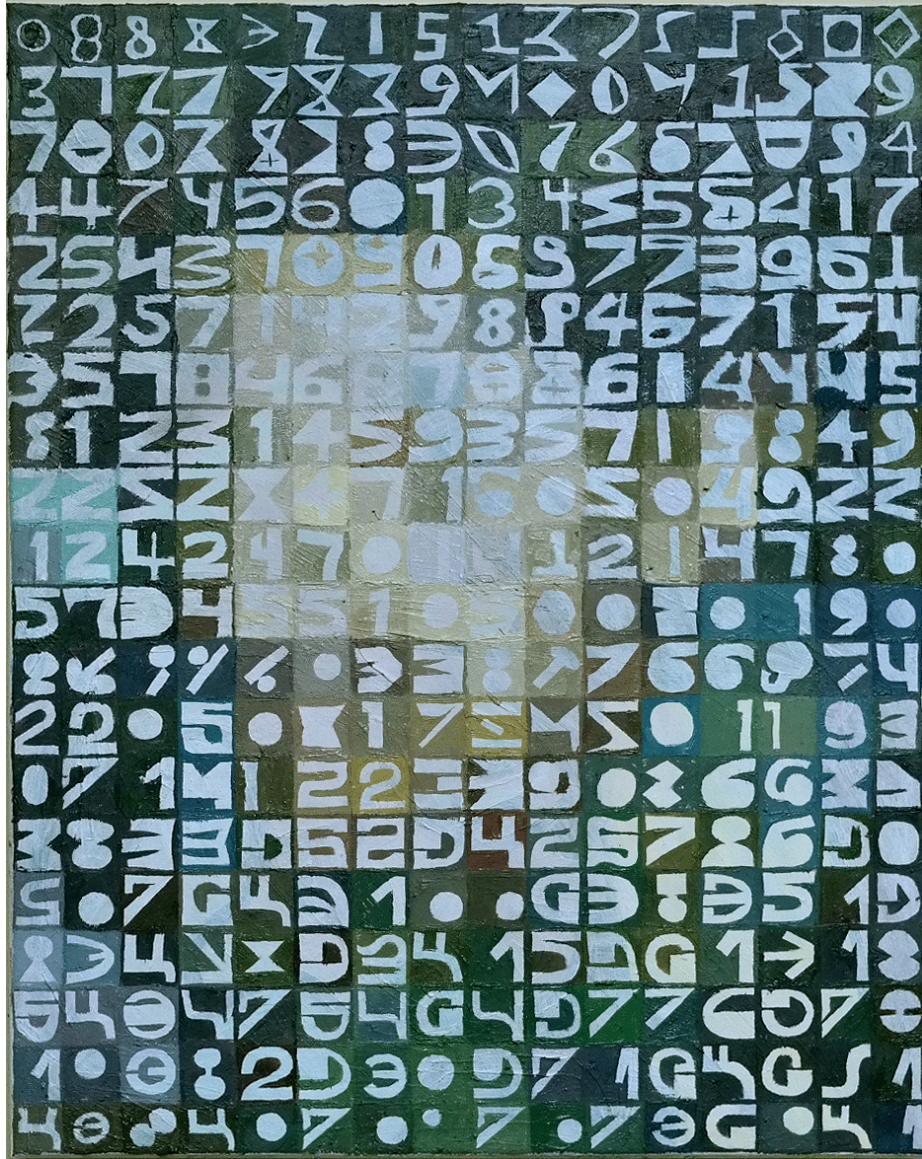


Figure 4: Self-portrait — digits 9,320-9,640 of π written from memory — oil on canvas — 16" \times 20" — 2019