

bitforms gallery



CLAUDIA HART

ILLUMINATIONS

April 26 - June 7, 2025

Opening Reception: Saturday, April 26, 5-7 PM

bitforms gallery is pleased to announce *ILLUMINATIONS*, Claudia Hart's fifth solo exhibition. *ILLUMINATIONS* presents a diverse body of work that pulls from the artist's vast library of decorative patterns and icons. These symbols incorporate a variety of graphics: the heraldry of failed empires, corporate logos, linguistic pictorial symbols like emoji, mathematical signs, decorative alphabets, and tile patterns culled from world cultures. Hart uses symbols as a basic visual vocabulary to incorporate larger algorithmic patterns that she then animates. The artist's signs and signifiers flicker, sometimes regularly and sometimes randomly, like techniques used by hypnotists to mesmerize and bring viewers into a trance state.

The *ILLUMINATIONS* feature dynamic video works encased in decorated wooden frames. The frames are fabricated through a hybrid process in which handiwork is combined with photography and a sophisticated computer-controlled printing technique. Each *ILLUMINATION* contains a miniature monitor that showcases a looping video work, including both legacy pieces produced between 2002–2019, and recent works from several concurrent series. Together, these animated paintings frame a poetic space: a meditation on the process of history, collapse and regeneration, mortality, and of art as a means of transcendence.

New works are part of three concurrent series: *Memory Theaters*, *Fallen Angels* and *Proxy Angels*. *Memory Theaters* (2023–2025) are a remix of the artist's 40-year archive into a series of new works. At the core of each piece is a motion capture performance where Hart enacts significant and allegorical events from her personal life. The set design features a theatrical animated environment filled with video documentations of actual live events. *Memory Theaters* evoke Grimm's

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fairy tales in an uncanny mix of experimental art history and personal memoir that bring together the past, present, and imaginary.

Fallen Angels (2024-2025) are fictional beings crafted by the artist as part of a mythology of children from an imaginary lost “Pod” of Archangels who live at the bottom of the ocean. There are seven Archangels in Hart’s legend that have all had the misfortune of falling in love with beings who are not angels, but other species. As a result, they have found themselves banished to the ocean depths, but not before fathering the *Fallen Angels*, who are advanced beings with special gifts. *Fallen Angels* naturally spawned a formal variant, *Proxy Angels* (2025) that originated through the artist’s experiments with AI text-to-video software.

“I described myself to the AI as an angel, but still an elderly Jewish woman from NY. I described my clothing and my wings. I described locations - spots where I’ve lived but are also canonical: symbols of NY, a canonical city, and therefore a representation of collective memories, so good fodder for an AI simulator - the Staten Island Ferry, under the elevated train in Flushing (where I was born), Central Park, Columbia University (where I went to school!). I wrote short, unornamented descriptive texts of them all. The text-to-image AI produced fake photographs - most of which I discarded. But enough have survived. I think of them as a new form of street photography, an outward description of my inner life.”

The focal point of Hart’s exhibition is *The Days*, a monumental algorithmic work. *The Days* software was designed by Andrew Blanton, in collaboration with Hart. This work also embodies Hart’s penchant for pattern - both the decorative and the symbolic. *The Days*, named for the days of the week, consists of real-time animations of seven medicinal wildflowers, all native to the Arab peninsula and used for healing. Each flower is a living algorithmic form that evolves and grows. *The Days* are projected onto an 8-foot tondo constructed in the gallery, and imagined as a portal into another world. The goal of Blanton + Hart was to translate a meditative experience into visual form. Beginning as clearly laid out patterns, the healing flowers ebb and flow, creating organic abstractions that evolve, decay and then come together again. The result is a mesmerizing, living painting unfolding in real time with infinite variations, mutating over the course of twenty-four hours. A new cycle of medicinal flowers restarts each day of the week at midnight, always beginning as a formal floral-patterned wallpaper, but then slowly evolving into a vast landscape filled with organic, flowing flowers, announcing itself every hour on the hour, like a meditative clock made for contemplation. During the course of the exhibition, a new species of flower appears that sparks a new, non-repeating evolution. The process takes 24 hours to unfold, then resets at noon the following day, to feature the next species in the cycle but initiating a new unfolding, related but different, unique but familiar in its pattern of growth, decay and regeneration.

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CLAUDIA HART (b. 1955, New York, NY) emerged as part of a generation of '90s intermedia artists examining issues of identity and representation. Since the late '90s when she began working with 3D animation, Hart embraced these same concepts, but now focusing on the impact of computing and simulation technologies. She was an early adopter of virtual imaging, using 3D animation to make media installations and projections, and later as they were invented, other forms of VR, AR, and objects produced by computer-driven production machines. At the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, where she is a professor, she developed a pedagogic program based on her practice – Experimental 3D – the first dedicated solely to teaching simulations technologies in an art-school context.

Hart's works are widely exhibited and collected by galleries and museums including the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Metropolitan Museum. Her work has been shown at the New Museum, produced at the Eyebeam Center for Art + Technology, where she was an honorary fellow in 2013-14, at Pioneer Works, NY, where she a technology resident in 2018, and at the Center for New Music and Audio Technology, UC California, Berkeley where she is currently a Fellow.

Founded in 2001, bitforms gallery represents established, mid-career, and emerging artists critically engaged with new technologies. Spanning the rich history of media art through its current developments, the gallery's program offers an incisive perspective on the fields of digital, internet, time-based, and new media art forms. For press inquiries, please contact info@bitforms.art or call (212) 366-6939