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What to See in N.Y.C. Galleries in August

by Jillian Steinhauer (August 7, 2025)



Agnieszka Kurant, "Semiotic Life," 2022/2025, bonsai juniper tree, 3-D-printed resin, enamel paint, ceramic flowerpot, soil, grow lamps.
Credit: Agnieszka Kurant and Marian Goodman Gallery; Photo by Elisabeth Bernstein

TRIBECA

Agnieszka Kurant

Through Aug. 22. Marian Goodman Gallery, 385 Broadway; 212-977-7160, mariangoodman.com.

It took me at least a minute of standing in front of Agnieszka Kurant's "Conversions 5" (2023/2025), part of her exhibition "Collective Intelligence," to realize that it was moving. The painting appears, at first, to be a fixed image of blue dots surrounded by blobs of glowing green amid a field of rusty red.

But as I stared, I realized that the dots and blobs were fading and shifting in almost imperceptible ways. My vision had to adjust before it could begin to register what I was seeing. And then, once it did, I let out an audible "whoa."

At its best, Kurant's art inspires this type of reaction. The Polish-born conceptual artist, who lives in New York, creates works that feel like propositions. For example, "Semiotic Life" (2022/2025), another piece in this exhibition, features a living bonsai tree intertwined with a bright blue, 3-D-printed resin rendering of what the news release calls "its algorithmically predicted, optimized future form." Kurant is asking how the technology we're all increasingly subject to quite literally shapes us.

In the case of "Conversions 5," the painting is made from liquid crystals that shift in response to heat signals generated by an algorithm, which tracks the emotions in social media posts by participants in global protest movements.

The piece, then, is a kind of live diagram — although it's not clear how to interpret it. How much does that matter? This is a sticking point of Kurant's fascinating artworks: The premises are sometimes so complicated that trying to understand them can dampen their impact.