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MUSÉE  
VANGUARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY CULTURE

## JUN 22 MONKEY BUSINESS | SUSAN INGLETT GALLERY

REVIEWS Written by Emily Ranieri



BELGA-PAR  
*Ses Peuvres Se Vendent*, 1964  
Silver gelatin print  
5 1/8 x 7 1/8 in.  
Edition unknown, unsigned and unnumbered  
Courtesy of Specific Object / David Platzker and Susan Inglett Gallery, NYC.

Artificial intelligence has been at the forefront of nearly every modern industry, leading many to question if the age of the all-doing machine is finally upon us. In creating artificial intelligence that mimics and reproduces human-made work, will the talents of skilled workers and artists be eradicated by the need to keep "progressing"? David Platzker's *Monkey Business: An Argument for Humanity* brilliantly investigates this question while drawing on the history of another being programmed to produce art: the chimpanzee. Platzker also includes the art of Jackson Pollock in the conversation, whose work was first seen as inexplicable and almost childlike by the public. Until July 28th at the Susan Inglett Gallery, *Monkey Business* invites viewers to explore the timeline of programmed art while confronting its implications on our present and future.

Since 2015, curator David Platzker has investigated "action painting," particularly in reference to Jackson Pollock; Pollock, an abstract painter, let his work speak for itself. He acted as a vessel for his paintings to take shape and exist as they were, allowing himself to participate both passively and actively in their conception. A 1949 *Life Magazine* issue divulges a telling quote from Pollock: "When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing." In *Monkey Business*, Platzker likens this phenomenon to art created by chimpanzees and AI – when these entities are given the tools to create, are they aware of what they're creating?

The exhibition features archival photographs collected by Platzker. These images showcase not only the art of chimpanzees as action paintings but also reveal their connection to people's entertainment. A silver gelatin print titled "Arty Betsy Tells All" from 1957 shows a chimp dressed in children's clothing. The chimp draws in a transparent box as on-lookers gawk. Through these images, Platzker questions the true motive of giving these primates an opportunity to create; are we presenting them with an opportunity to express themselves, or are we simply struck by the fact they can? The exhibition begs the same question with regard to artificial intelligence; viewers are asked to analyze the purpose of machine-created art and determine if it's truly a necessary tool or merely entertainment.

A similar image, "Can't Make a Chump Out of This Chimp," was printed in *Associated Press* in 1957. A dressed-up chimpanzee and a human man are photographed alongside one another, both with a paintbrush in hand, further likening the chimpanzee to artificial intelligence given the means to create. The exhibition also includes four paintings by chimpanzees represented by Save the Chimps, an animal protection organization and sanctuary, to which the exhibition's proceeds will be donated. The paintings simultaneously emphasize the correlation between chimpanzees-made art and AI-generated art while raising awareness of their endangerment and exploitation in the name of amusement.

In the back corner of the gallery sits a second, smaller gallery where Platzker displays three action paintings generated by an artificial intelligence program called DALL-E. Generated in the styles of artists Lee Krasner, Franz Kline, and Jackson Pollock, these accurate paintings are a reminder that the work of these artists is deeply embedded into art history and internet databases.