

Ambivalent Mutations

Drawing, distributed authorship and the unstable image



A three-work series moving from human authorship to human-AI collaboration to AI generation.

Mutation as image. Mutation as method.

Ambivalent Mutations is a three-work inquiry into authorship, embodiment and technological mediation. Across the series, agency is deliberately shifted: the first work is made entirely by the artist's hand; the second is produced through a sequential human -> AI -> human -> AI -> human exchange; the third transfers image-making to AI before returning the result to physical form as a fine-art print.

Despite these changing conditions, a shared visual language persists. Folds, membranes, tendrils and cavities form bodies that hover between plant, organ, cocoon, wound and architecture. The images are neither fully botanical nor anatomical. They inhabit the unstable territory where one category begins to become another.

The project treats mutation as both subject and procedure. Forms mutate on the page, but so does the position of the author. Each stage inherits what came before. Rather than using AI to imitate a finished style or automate a predetermined result, the series uses it as an interruption within an irreversible process. The question is not whether the human or the machine makes the "better" image, but how knowledge of authorship changes the way an image is judged.



DETAIL - AMBIVALENT MUTATIONS II

The image does not change. The judgement might.



The triptych is intended to be encountered before its production histories are disclosed. At first, the three works exist on equal visual terms. The viewer may prefer one, reject another, or form assumptions about labour, intention and skill without knowing which was made by a human, collaboratively, or by AI.

Only afterwards does provenance enter. Nothing visible in the image has changed, yet the viewer's relation to it may shift. In this project, provenance is not neutral metadata added after the artwork; it becomes part of the artwork's operation. The sequence first encounter -> judgement -> disclosure -> reconsideration turns authorship into an aesthetic condition rather than a label.



Flesh of Growth in Visceral Eden

HUMAN / PHYSICAL



MEDIUM / STATE

Charcoal pencil on paper. Automatic drawing executed without erasing. A4 (21 x 29.7 cm). Presentation reproduced as a fine-art print.

READING

Work I begins with automatic charcoal drawing and no erasure. The composition grows through accumulation rather than correction: overlapping folds, tendrils and leaf- or tissue-like structures gather into a vertically concentrated body. Growth appears neither benign nor catastrophic. It is sensuous and unstable, suspended between plant, organ, cocoon and wound. Because nothing is erased, hesitation and redirection remain embedded in the drawing; consequence becomes visible.

Membranes of Consequence

DISTRIBUTED AUTHORSHIP / PHYSICAL <-> DIGITAL



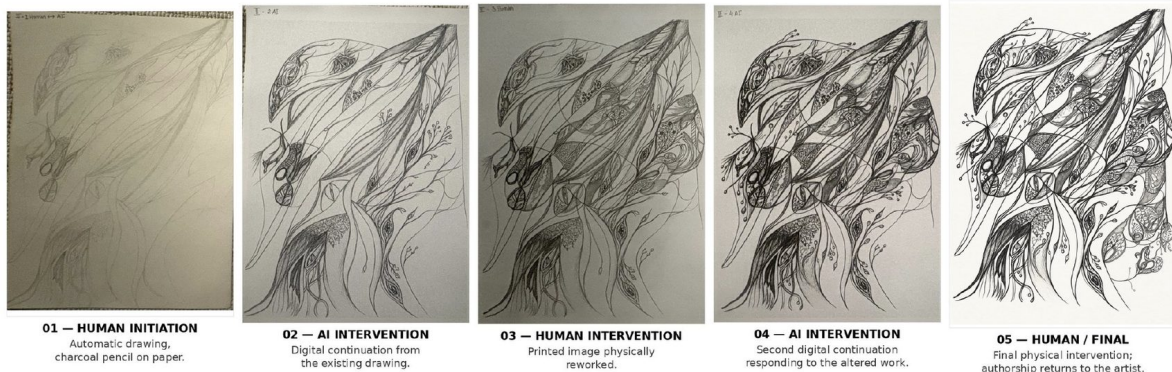
MEDIUM / STATE

Charcoal drawing, AI image intervention, printing and physical reworking across five sequential stages. A4 (21 x 29.7 cm). Final agency returns to the artist.

READING

Work II redistributes authorship without dissolving it. Initiated by the artist, the drawing passes through five stages: human -> AI -> human -> AI -> human. Each intervention becomes the condition of the next. The image develops as a field of layered membranes, cavities and thresholds - forms that seem to protect and expose at the same time. The method mirrors the image: boundaries are repeatedly made, crossed and remade.

Each intervention becomes the condition of the next.



PHYSICAL -> DIGITAL -> PHYSICAL -> DIGITAL -> PHYSICAL

- 01 - Human initiation. Automatic charcoal drawing on paper.
- 02 - AI intervention. Digital continuation from the existing drawing.
- 03 - Human intervention. The printed image is physically reworked.
- 04 - AI intervention. A second digital continuation responds to the altered work.
- 05 - Human / final. A final physical intervention returns agency to the artist.

The sequence is deliberately cumulative. No stage begins from a neutral prompt or blank field; every participant receives a transformed inheritance. Authorship is therefore documented as transfer, response and consequence.

The Garden After the Body

AI / DIGITAL -> PHYSICAL



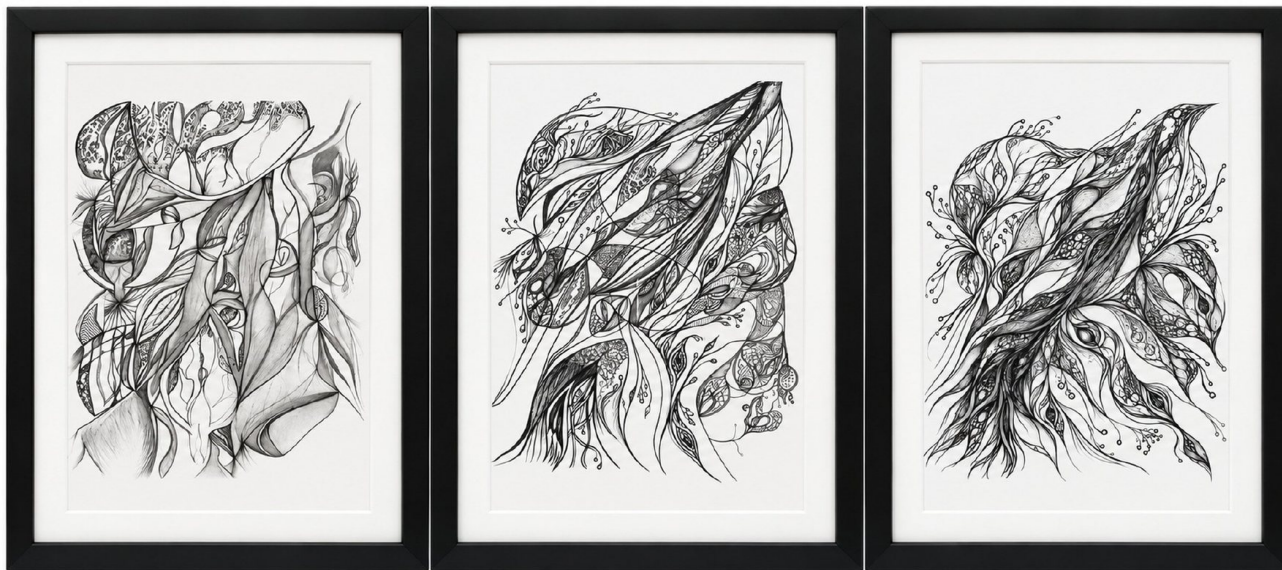
MEDIUM / STATE

AI-generated drawing returned to physical form as a fine-art print. A4 (21 x 29.7 cm). Printed on Hahnemühle Velvet Balder 265 g.

READING

In Work III, image-making is transferred to AI. The resulting form is more symmetrical, radiating and architectonic: a body that appears botanical and crystalline at once. It concludes the series not as a technological climax, but as a test. Placed beside the two preceding works, it asks whether provenance silently changes the value assigned to an image. The digital output is returned to material space as a fine-art object.

One visual family. Three different origins.



I

HUMAN / PHYSICAL

Gesture, irreversibility, bodily decision.
The hand remains the sole origin of the image.

II

DISTRIBUTED / HYBRID

Negotiation, transfer and shared agency.
Authorship moves across physical and digital states.

III

AI / DIGITAL-PHYSICAL

Delegation, distance and disclosure.
Image-making is transferred, then rematerialised.

What remains constant? A visual language of membranes, growth, vulnerability and transformation.
What changes? Origin, agency and the viewer's knowledge of how the image came into being.

The route of the image is part of the image.

The series is held together not by a single production technique but by a controlled shift in agency. The physical and digital are treated as successive states rather than opposing media. Scanning, generation, printing and drawing are all points at which the work can be altered, inherited or returned.

Irreversibility. The hand-drawn stages are executed without erasure. Marks accumulate and remain accountable to previous decisions.

Translation. Work II moves repeatedly between paper and digital image. Each translation changes what the next intervention can become.

Provenance. The authorship sequence is documented and disclosed. Knowing who - or what - made a particular image is treated as an active aesthetic variable.

Display. The three works are presented together in matte black frames with passepartout so that visual judgement can precede disclosure of their different production histories.

SERIES DETAILS

ARTIST

Patricia Sambo

YEAR

2026

FORMAT

Three works, A4

DIMENSIONS

21 x 29.7 cm each

WORK I

Charcoal pencil on paper

WORK II

Human-AI-human-AI-human

WORK III

AI-generated fine-art print

PRINT STOCK

Hahnemühle Velvet Balder 265 g

PRESENTATION

Matte black frame, 2 cm
passepartout

Drawing as a site of unstable authorship.

My practice begins with drawing as a way of allowing forms to emerge before they are named. I am drawn to unstable boundaries: body and plant, protection and exposure, physical and digital, author and system. Irreversibility matters because it leaves evidence of decision. A mark that cannot simply be removed becomes a condition for whatever follows.

In Ambivalent Mutations, that logic moves beyond charcoal into distributed authorship. AI is not presented as spectacle, replacement or proof of technical progress. It becomes a site where control can be surrendered, returned and renegotiated. I want the viewer to encounter the image before being told how to value it, and then to notice what changes when authorship is disclosed.

The work remains deliberately ambivalent: attraction and discomfort, vulnerability and protection, growth and dissolution are never fully resolved. The same uncertainty is applied to authorship itself.



ARTWORKS

- I - Flesh of Growth in Visceral Eden
- II - Membranes of Consequence
- III - The Garden After the Body

Patricia Sambo / 2026

Catalogue edition - Ambivalent Mutations

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