

Tatol, Sean. "Monkey Business: An Argument for Humanity," *The Manhattan Art Review*, 14 July 2023.

**Monkey Business: An Argument for Humanity** - Susan Inglett - \*\*\*\*

A kind of brilliant and very funny conceptual research meta-commentary exhibition, *Monkey Business* revives the question of "Is Jackson Pollock art?" 70 years on. In a time where Twitter accounts can ask with a straight face why we don't paint like we did 300 years ago and have over a half-million followers (here's a hint: it's 300 years later), and DALL-E is mainly used by grown men to make rehashes of sci-fi imagery from their childhood, it's a question that bears repeating. The show contrasts Pollock's feature in *Life* with paintings by chimpanzees and DALL-E imitations of AbEx classics, supplemented heavily with photos of the chimpanzee painters, apparently a hot topic in the middle of the 20th century.

The chimp paintings are nice in the way that children's paintings are nice, i.e. immediate, unrestrained, and unsophisticated, and they're a good counterpoint that reveals Pollock's attempt to harness that immediacy while retaining artistic sophistication. Meanwhile the DALL-E pieces have none of those merits, which I guess explains the show's subtitle, and it's a pleasure to have AI art in a gallery with the express purpose of showing that it sucks. Somewhat ironically, the dominant sensibility ends up being midcentury photojournalism and magazine design, which also doubles down on the moral of the show: If AI can't paint and magazines looked better when they were made by hand, aren't we losing something by outsourcing our work to computers?