

At times, it moves peacefully, at other times, it jolts with sudden convulsions, as if gripped by panic. Placed on a mirrored platform, this imposing animated deer skeleton dominates the space with its towering stature, both graceful and nightmarish. Named 'Insilico' and designed by Mat Collishaw, the installation occupies the ground floor of Wilde gallery, which, along with 'Vivisystems,' hosts the British artist's first solo exhibition in Geneva.

Collishaw, 58, offers a fascinating and unsettling reflection on the parallels between computer systems and the natural world, as well as their convergence. 'By using artificial intelligence (AI) to create images for my work, I noticed elements becoming recursive over time, like in a genetic code,' he explains. 'It felt like I was witnessing the birth of an alien, it was quite eerie.'

The eerie nature is also reflected in the frantic movements of the deer skeleton: 'I designed this creature to demonstrate the toxic nature of social networks,' adds the Nottingham-born artist. The animatronic creature, made of resin, aluminium, and metal, contains an electrical circuit linked to software that analyses the intensity of insults aimed at individuals on X (formerly Twitter) — with a live feed and the code used displayed on a screen behind the artwork.

The piece becomes more erratic as the level of abuse increases. 'I wanted a sculpture that could represent this feeling of hatred and its effects,' Collishaw emphasises. He chose the deer as it symbolises Christ in Catholic iconography — a noble, revered animal whose suffering reflects the cruelty inflicted both in hunting and online behaviour.

The title 'Insilico' is a play on the Latin-inspired neologism, akin to 'in vitro,' but referring to experiments conducted via computer models rather than living material. The exhibition continues upstairs with a series of oil paintings reminiscent of 17th-century Flemish art. Titled 'Alluvion,' these works initially appear as traditional still lifes but reveal hybrid creatures upon closer inspection — flowers and insects blending in surreal ways, a nod to the scientific phenomenon of Pouyannian mimicry seen in orchids, which use visual tricks to deceive insects into pollinating them.

Mat Collishaw used AI to generate these images, merging the style of the Dutch Golden Age with a Frankenstein-esque experimental process. 'Over time, the images mutated, like living organisms,' he recounts. The choice to present these in the classical medium of oil painting makes them both enchanting and unsettling, challenging traditional art history references, as still lifes typically remind us of life's fleeting nature. Here, that life has become dangerously synthetic.

The third part of the series also presents a fusion of flowers and insects that seem to have merged even more intensely. It is as if, through continuous manipulation, the natural and the artificial have given birth to mutant organisms, which are displayed in large format on the walls. The originality once again lies in the medium: these floral compositions in their vases have been woven on a Jacquard loom, the first mechanical machine with a programmable system using punched cards, invented in 1801 by Joseph Marie Jacquard from Lyon.

'This machine is, in a way, the precursor to modern computing,' explains the British artist. 'It paved the way for the birth of the first software in the 1840s.' The representation of these biologically futuristic bouquets in the solemn silk weave of tapestry feels like a premonition, and no one knows whether to consider it a good omen.