

MADELINE HILDEBRANDT

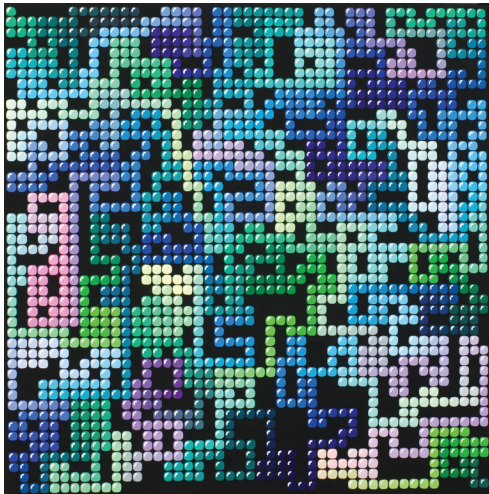
CURATED BY: CASSIE DE JONG
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**ART
ON
DEMAND 5.4**

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Chronic anxiety is one of the most common types of mental illness in Canada. About three-quarters of Canadians who access health services for mental illness specifically seek treatment for mood and anxiety disorders.¹ Characterized by excessive and persistent feelings of apprehension, worry, and fear, the affliction can take the form of short-lived episodes or long-term battles. These disorders have a major impact on the affected individual's daily life, energy levels, and general well-being.

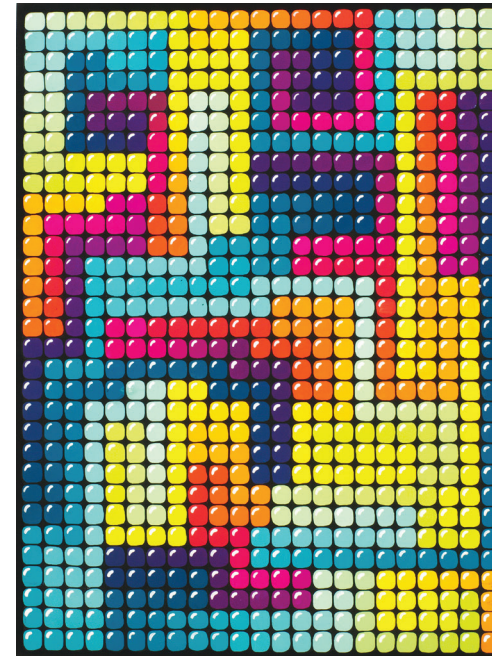


While it is vital for those affected by mood disorders to seek professional care, active self-management strategies can also be beneficial. Often, simple tasks can provide the distraction and satisfaction needed to overcome immediate feelings of distress. The growing prevalence and awareness of mood disorders has precipitated the need for more effective anxiety-management strategies, and simplistic, curative outlets.

Madeline Hildebrandt is an Abbotsford-based artist whose studio practice includes painting, drawing, and sculpture. Across a variety of media, her practice is bound together by her interest in process—the act of making itself—often using highly repetitive processes. Like many people today, Hildebrandt struggles with anxiety. For her, incorporating gestures of repetition into her artistic practice allows her to access a meditative state of mind that supersedes her anxiety-ridden thoughts and aids her progression in healing.

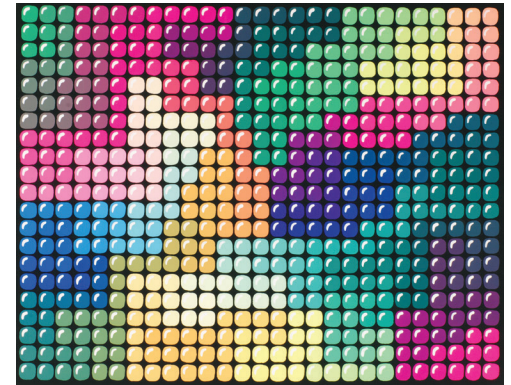
Hildebrandt's recent series of gouache paintings, *Pixelated Pathways*, presents multitudes of pixel-like shapes that link together to form seemingly endless 'pathways' through gradient colour transitions. Stimulating visual progressions unfold along chains of tones and hues that recall classic forms of pop entertainment such as retro arcade games. The series initially began as an experiment in colour blocking, but the relief Hildebrandt experienced while repeatedly mapping out maze-like patterns, carefully selecting palettes, and indulging in the colourful saturation of surfaces encouraged her to consider the series simultaneously as an experiment in self-care.

The considerable amount of time that Hildebrandt dedicates to each work in the series allows her to shift her attention away from her feelings of anxiety, replacing these thought patterns with a sense of satisfaction and productivity. This approach also underscores Hildebrandt's belief in the value of effort and concentration to her practice. Each painting in *Pixelated Pathways* is titled after the amount of 'pixels' present in the composition. Ranging from tens to thousands, each 'pixel' is given utmost care, as if they are each a tiny artwork unto itself.



When she was younger, Hildebrandt was drawn to other meticulous processes of art making such as cross stitch, because it helped her focus. The relationship between the meticulous act of stitching and the repetitive patterns in her current practice is not difficult to identify. Just as Hildebrandt found childhood solace in the monotonous gestures of embroidery, today that instinctive rhythm forms the foundation for a signature process that similarly helps her to manage her anxiety.

The nostalgic nature of the works continues in its visual references to the animated aesthetic of retro gaming technology. In the last decade, classic video games have seen a surge in popularity amongst new audiences that are increasingly interested in finding stimulating distractions from their worries. Hildebrandt's pixel paintings directly reference the era of Pac Man and



other arcade games and encapsulate the aesthetic of classic arcade phenomena.

The nostalgic allusions to her own childhood and popular retro-gaming technology, coupled with the time and dedication evident in each finished work, encourages viewers to reflect on what constitutes as self-healing and consider their own anxiety-management strategies. Hildebrandt's intricate process of mapping and colour-blocking aids in her personal healing journey, and invites viewers to contemplate their own pathways towards improved mental health.

– Emerge Curator, Cassie de Jong

¹ McRae, Li et al. "Report summary - Mood and Anxiety Disorders in Canada, 2016." Health promotion and chronic disease prevention in Canada: research, policy and practice vol. 36, 12 (2016): 314-315.



MADELINE HILDEBRANDT

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

A life-long Abbotsford resident, Madeline Hildebrandt recently completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of the Fraser Valley. Her studio practice during her degree focused on painting, drawing and sculpture. Madeline's environmental concerns have also inspired an installation series of undersea environments, created using plastics as a commentary on the state of the oceans. As a painter, Madeline uses a traditional medium to express her aesthetic interest in outdated digital technology. Her work is centred around process, using repetition as a meditative tool to relieve her anxiety.



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