For Immediate Release:
DAINA MATTIS | *COUCH SURFING: MASTER COPIES IN THE AGE OF FAST FURNITURE*

October 30 - December 19, 2026
Artist Reception: Friday, October 30, 6-8PM

"Show me the Monet!" —a security guard at the Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris

Money talks. And what could be louder than an original painting by Claude Monet? Maybe a to-scale reproduction hanging above a couch. Or, in this case, a classically trained painter choosing to spend an unreasonable amount of time copying Monet by hand.

Monet → money → master copy → mimicry → Maguire.

Jerry Maguire shouting "Show me the money!" was also in the business of representation: converting someone else's talent, body, performance, and public image into economic value. A hundred years later, Monet hardly needs an agent—but maybe he has an AI one. Claude?

Couch Surfing begins with the age-old tradition of the master copy: learning through careful observation and imitation of another artist's brushstrokes, color, and composition. It is slow, tedious, intimate work in an economy whose general motto is cheaper, faster, easier. AI generates an image in seconds. Furniture arrives flat-packed. A penny saved is a penny earned.

Six of the seven couch-scaled paintings use average dimensions established with AI as the framework for hand-painted master copies of Monet's *Water Lilies* at the Musée de l'Orangerie. The seventh, based on a painting at the Musée Marmottan Monet, is flocked and references its mass reproduction by IKEA. Together, they are augmented through meta-devices of reduction and redaction: exposed linen, transparencies, geometric shapes, and black mourning veils that obscure as much as they reveal.

They surround *ViewMaster*, an installation built around that anchor of the living room—the entertainment system—part monolith, part pedestal, part shrine. Sand vitrines shift into new impressions, a plastic plant lives indefinitely, and my deceased partner's ashes occupy the shelves. The only thing missing is the couch. There is no place to rest.

But what exactly am I copying when I copy a Monet?

Monet was trying to capture something he couldn't keep: light, time, atmosphere, an impression. At Giverny, he constructed a garden and pond and painted its reflections, eventually removing the horizon almost entirely. Sky becomes water. Water becomes mirror—the black mirror of his day. Today we carry our own black mirrors in our pockets, endlessly reflecting, framing, and constructing ourselves through them. Somewhere between Monet's pond and the iPhone screen, Narcissus is still staring back—only now the reflection has followers. The danger was never the reflection. It was falling in.

Monet's paintings of a man-made pond now live in the Musée de l'Orangerie, originally built to shelter orange trees from the Paris winter. Constructed nature, painted by hand, preserved inside architecture built to preserve nature. And now we bring Monet home, returning his constructed nature to our own.

Coinciding with the centennial of Monet's death, Couch Surfing honors and grieves Monet, nature, and the handmade. The exhibition collapses distinctions: original and copy, nature and artifice, work and rest, museum and living room, handmade and automated, luxury and trash, screen and object, permanence and disposability. Even "underwater" describes something whose value has fallen below what we paid for it—a fitting economic metaphor when a water lily floats peacefully above everything submerged beneath it.

Maybe that is where ***Couch Surfing*** ultimately sits: somewhere between floating and underwater. We keep trying to capture what is already disappearing, manufacture permanence from temporary things, and assign dollar amounts to objects, labor, land, images, even time. We build faster, copy faster, consume faster, discard faster, and call the efficiency progress. Meanwhile, the couch ends up on the sidewalk, the plastic plant outlives the tree, Monet becomes a JPEG, and our planned obsolescence becomes permanent trash.

A master copy does the opposite. It wastes time. It requires looking. It asks the hand to follow another hand that stopped moving a hundred years ago. Maybe that is why I am making them now.

Channel surfing → couch surfing → doomscrolling.

All three describe moving without arriving.

We've gotten very good at moving on. I'm interested in what refuses to.

—Daina Mattis
New York, 2026